

SERMONS

227d5
Preached upon

Several Occasions.

By *W. SHERLOCK*, D.D.

Late Dean of *St. Paul's*, Master of the *Temple*,
and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE FOURTH EDITION.



LONDON:

Printed for R. WARE, J. WALTHOE, J. and
P. KNAPTON, S. BIRT, D. BROWNE, T. and
T. LONGMAN, C. HITCH and L. HAWES,
J. CLARKE, J. HODGES, J. and J. RIVINGTON,
R. BALDWIN, J. WARD, and W. JOHNSTON.

MDCCLV.

SEYMOUR

London

General Collection

W. W. W. W. W.

London

1870





T O T H E
R E A D E R.

I Do not publish these Sermons for the Sake of any Curiosity in their Composition, but because they are plain and useful; and since after more than forty Years constant Preaching, the Infirmities of Age and Sickneſs have in a great Meaſure diſabled me for that Service, I am deſirous ſtill to ſerve God, and his Church, and the Souls of Men, in the beſt Manner I can; and I know nothing better that I am capable of, than to make ſome uſeful Diſcourſes more public from the Preſs than they were, or could poſſibly be from the Pulpit. There are indeed great Numbers of Sermons daily printed, and many very good ones, but I think this no Objection

against Printing more : For there are great Numbers of Readers too, Men of different Capacities and Palates, who in such a Variety may meet both with what will please them, and do them good : If these Sermons prove in any Measure useful, it is what I desire, and pray, and shall praise God for.

W. SHERLOCK.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. The Knowledge and
Fear of God the truest Wisdom.

Proverbs ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the
beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of
the Holy is understanding.* Page 1.

SERMON II. Obedience the best Evi-
dence of our Love to God.

1 John v. 3. *For this is the love of God, that
we keep his commandments; and his com-
mandments are not grievous.* p. 19.

SERMON III. To be Doers of the Word,
and not Hearers only.

James i. 22. *But be ye doers of the word, and
not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*
P. 33.

SERMON IV. Confession and Sorrow
for Sin.

Psalms xxxviii. 18. *For I will declare mine
iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.* p. 53.

SERMON V. The Purification of our
Lives by God's Word.

Psalms cxix. 9. *Wherewith shall a young man
cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto ac-
cording to thy word.* P. 75.

SER-

vi CONTENTS.

SERMON VI. Against Thoughtfulness
for To-morrow.

Matth. vi. 34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of its self: sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* p. 95.

SERMON VII. Concerning Lukewarmness.

Revelations iii. 15, 16. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* p. 115.

SERMON VIII, IX. How to work out
our own Salvation.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* p. 133, 155.

SERMON X. Forgiveness of Sins only
through Christ.

Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* p. 181.

SER-

CONTENTS. vii

SERMON XI. Prayer in the Name of Christ.

John xvi. 23, 24.—*Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

P. 199.

SERMON XII. The State of the Heathens without Christ.

Ephesians ii. 12. *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the World.*

p. 225.

SERMON XIII. Christ the Light of the World.

Luke ii. 32. *A light to lighten the Gentiles.*

P. 245.

SERMON XIV, XV. How Christ enlightens the World.

Luke ii. 32. *A light to lighten the Gentiles.*

273, 307

SERMON XVI. The Evidence of Faith without Sight.

John xx. 29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed*

blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

P. 331.

SERMON XVII. The Constraining Love of Christ.

2 Corinthians v. 14, 15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

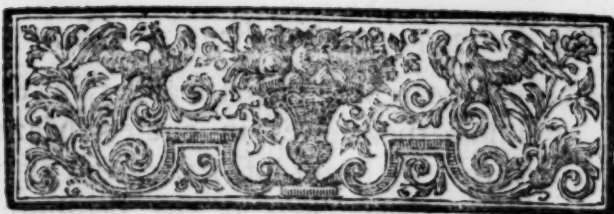
P. 351.

SERMON XVIII. The Evidence of Prophecy that Jesus is the Messias.

Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 27. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken? Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*

367.

SER-



S E R M O N I.

The Knowledge and Fear of God
the truest Wisdom.

P R O V. ix. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.



THESE Words, and others of the same Importance, are frequently repeated in the *Psalms* and *Proverbs*; which may satisfy us of what great Weight and Moment they are, and how much they deserve our frequent and serious Meditation. Wisdom and Knowledge are the great Ornaments of Human Nature, and absolutely necessary to a happy Life: This is what all Men desire to have, and what some Men pursue with infinite Labour; but what few find,

VOL. II.

B

after

2 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

after all their Searches. Men wander in the dark, and lose themselves in endless Mazes and Labyrinths, for want of setting out right at first: One wrong Step at the Beginning turns them out of the Way; which they are never able to find again. But my Text teaches us where to begin our Enquiries, and what is the first Fundamental Principle of Wisdom and Knowledge; which will give us a true Understanding of all other Matters. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning, the Principle, the Foundation, of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.*

I know very well, that by the *fear of the Lord*, and the *knowledge of the Holy*, is commonly understood Religion in general; for so sometimes the Fear and Knowledge of God signifies in Scripture; and then the Meaning is, that Religion is the truest Wisdom and Understanding: Which is a great and certain Truth. But I rather chuse to understand the *fear of the Lord*, and the *knowledge of the Holy*, in a stricter Sense, for the Knowledge, and the Fear, and Reverence of God. That this is the Knowledge which will give us a true Understanding in other Matters, without which we cannot rightly understand any thing; and that this is the first Fundamental Principle of all true Wisdom, without which it is impossible that a Man should act wisely in any thing. That there is no Knowledge worth any thing, without the Knowledge of God, nor
any

any true Wisdom without the Fear of God. Both which I shall distinctly speak to; which, I hope, may recommend the Knowledge and the Fear of God to us, when it shall appear that there is no true Understanding, no true Wisdom, without it.

I. To begin with Knowledge. Now setting aside the Knowledge of God, there are but Two Things we can pretend to know any thing of; the Natural, or the Moral World.

1. The Knowledge of Nature. And what is there in Nature worth our knowing, without knowing God, the Maker of the World? Yes, you will say, whether Men believe a God, or know any thing of him or not, they have the same World to contemplate; the same Heavens and Earth, with all the rich Furniture of them, that those have who believe a God, and that this God was the Maker of the World. Very true: But they have not the same Eyes to see it with, nor do they see it in the same Light.

Those who do not believe a God who made the World, know nothing of its Original or End. They may entertain themselves with what Speculations they please, but 'tis certain they can know nothing of it: Whether they say that the World was from Eternity just as it now is, or that Matter only is Eternal, and after infinite Trials and Jumbings, cast itself

4 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

into that beautiful Order wherein we now see it. If you ask them how they know this? they have nothing to say, but that this may be, and they guess thus it was, because they would have it so. But they were not from Eternity themselves, nor coeval with the Formation of the World; nor, according to their Hypothesis, was there any other intelligent Being then present, that could tell them how the World was made.

It is not my Business at present, to expose the Folly and Absurdity of these Atheistical Principles; but only to observe, that this is in truth to know nothing; and it were the wisest way for such Men to own it: For it is impossible to know any thing about the first Original of the World, if there were not a first Supreme Cause, who gave Being to all Things. For we must either know it by the Relation of Some-body, who saw how the World was made; or by Reason. But if there were no Intelligent Being at the making of the World, there was none to tell us how it was made; and if the World was not made by Reason, but by mere Chance and Accident, Reason can never discover how the World was made; for there is no Reason in Chance, nor any Reason to be given for it. So that we can know Nothing about the Origin of the World, without the Knowledge of God, who is the Maker of it. And yet this is the first Question every Man will ask
who

who sees the World; Whence it is? and how it was made? Which it is impossible to give a satisfactory Answer to, without acknowledging a First Cause; that is, without the Knowledge of God.

Well: whether the World were from Eternity without any Cause, or were made by the fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, or by God; it is the same World still, and appears the same to Atheists and Infidels, as it does to the most hearty Believers. Very true; the external visible Appearance is the same to them all; but yet their Knowledge of the World is not the same.

Whatever Glories and Beauties the Atheist observes in the visible World, he can take no Rational Pleasure nor Satisfaction in it; for he can see Nothing in it, but some lucky Chance; and the only Effect of that is, to make him wonder: And I confess he has great Reason to wonder, that Chance should make Things as wisely, as the Divineſt Art and Skill could contrive them. But what is the Pleasure and Satisfaction of Wonder? Nothing but the Amusement of Ignorance. Such Men think it strange, as well they may, that such a World should be the Effect of Chance; and this is all the Entertainment the World can give them: And if we will call this Knowledge, what is this Knowledge worth, which teaches us Nothing, gives no Satisfaction, much less, Pleasure to the Mind?

6 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

But the Belief of a God who made the World, gives us a very different Prospect of the Works of Nature. A little Observation will discover to us the Wonders and Mysteries of a Divine Art: Such Glory and Majesty, Uniformity and Harmony, in the Structure of the whole World: Such surprizing Beauties and Usefulness in every Part of it, as infinitely please, and ravish, and transport us, with the Love, Admiration, and Praise of the Wise and Almighty Maker of all Things. This may properly be called Knowledge; for though we know not how the World was made, which Creatures are not concerned to know, who have no Power to make a World; yet we know by whom it was made; which gives Ease and Satisfaction to our Minds, when we have found the First Cause; and then the more we know of Nature, the more we shall adore and admire the Author of it: Every new Discovery gives a new Pleasure to us, and new Degrees and Fervor to our Devotion: We contemplate the Invisible Majesty of God, in his visible Works, and cry out with the Psalmist, *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Psal. viii. 3, 4.

In short, this World may please the Eye, and minister to our bodily Pleasures, without

out knowing any thing of God; but it can give no Entertainment to the Mind; we know Nothing of it, we can see Nothing but Chance in it; which confounds and amuses, but does not please. But when we know that the World was made by God, this gives us a transporting Admiration of his Divine Art and Wisdom in the Beauty and Usefulness of the whole Creation; it excites all those delightful Passions, of Love, and Joy, and Praise, and Thanksgiving, to our bountiful Creator: And the more we know of the World, the more we discover and adore the Incomprehensible Glories and Perfections of the Maker of it.

Thus much in General: And I shall instance but in one Particular, wherein we ourselves are most nearly concerned; and that is, the Knowledge of ourselves. All that an Atheist can know of Human Nature, is so far from being worth knowing, that it would make a wise and considering Man despise his own Being: For what a worthless contemptible Creature is Man, if he be the mere Creature of Chance; a little organized Matter, which will soon fall a-pieces, and dissolve into unthinking Atoms again. The Distinction between Soul and Body, the Immortality of the Soul, the moral Differences between Good and Evil; indeed the best and noblest Part of the World, the whole Moral and Intellectual World, hath no Place in the Atheistic Scheme; for there is Nothing of all this in Matter and

8 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

Chance: And though they must allow of such a Thing as Reasoning and Thinking, because they feel it in themselves, yet they know not what to do with it; they know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes.

But if we believe an Infinite Eternal Mind which made the World, it is necessary to acknowledge an Essential Difference between Body and Spirit; and as natural to believe that this Eternal Mind would create Minds as well as Matter: And here we find Reason and Thought, the Eternal Maxims of Truth, and Rules of Virtue, the Image of that Eternal Mind that made them. This is certain, we can know Nothing of our own Souls, or of the Moral and Spiritual World, which is the divinest and most necessary Knowledge, without knowing God: So that if there be any thing in the whole Creation worth knowing, there must be a God; and if we would know any thing that is worth knowing, we must lay the Foundation of all in the Knowledge of God.

Another Sort of Knowledge which is very entertaining, is, The History of the Moral World, or the History of Mankind in their several Ages and Generations; the Rise, and Growth, and Decays of Kingdoms and Families; their Virtues and Vices, their Laws and Government, and all the Variety of Events which happened to them both in Peace and War.

This

This must be acknowledged to be very diverting, but of no great Use, if we leave God out of the World. A History of Events entertains with great Variety, gratifies our Curiosity, delights and surprizes; and so does a Romance. But the true Use of it is, when we consider it as a History of Providence. Those who believe that the World is governed, as they do that it was made, by Chance, see Nothing but a great Lottery, in all the various Changes of Human Affairs; they can learn Nothing by it, but the giddy Revolutions, the frequent Shiftings of Scenes, without any Rule, or Order, or Design; which is a lamentable Account of the State of this World, and enough to make all thinking Men desperate; when, let them do what they will, they have Nothing but a Chance whether they shall be Happy or Miserable. Though they see never so many visible Examples of the Rewards of Virtue, and the Punishments of Vice; that *righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is the reproach of any people*; all this can teach them Nothing, unless it teach them that God governs the World.

The Knowledge of a Divine Providence will make it as useful as it is pleasant to us. For though there are a great many Depths and Mysteries as well in Providence as in the Creation, which we cannot particularly account for; (for who can unfathom the unfathomable Secrets of the Divine Government?) yet we shall

10 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

shall easily perceive, that what some Men call Chance, hath the visible Impressions and Signatures of a divine Wisdom and Counsel; especially if we view the State of the Heathen World in the Sacred History, and in *Daniel's* Prophecies of the Four Monarchies, which give us an Insight into the great Designs of Providence, in those wonderful Revolutions. Thus much is plain, that there is a vast Difference between a History of mere Events, and a History of Providence. To know barely what has been done, when we cannot form it into any certain and steady Rules of Life, (which cannot be done, if the World be governed by Chance,) is of little Use to us. But if God govern the World, the various Events of Providence furnish us with many wise Instructions, and make the Examples of former Ages of great Use.

Thus I have shewn that there is no Knowledge worth having, that can be had without the Knowledge of God. But besides this, *the knowledge of the Holy is understanding*; that is, the most perfect and excellent Knowledge that Human Nature is capable of. For God is the greatest and most excellent Being, and to know him even in such an imperfect Manner as we can know him in this World, is the greatest Perfection of Knowledge and Understanding that we can have in this World. The Desires of Knowledge are Infinite, and Nothing can fill them but an infinite Object. We
see

see an End of all other Perfections; but when we lose our Sight in a boundless Prospect, when we see as far as we can, and certainly know that there is infinitely more that we cannot see, this both delights and transports, and gives us an excellent Understanding.

Such Men know how to distinguish between God and Creatures: Let the Sun shine never so bright, and the Heavens show all their sparkling Glories, let the Angels themselves appear in their Native Splendor, they will own them for excellent Creatures and divine Ministers, but reserve their religious Adoration for God alone. We shall find no Saints, not the Virgin *Mary* herself, in their Litanies; they know the Distinction betwixt God and Creatures; and that puts an End to all Pagan and Christian Idolatry.

Those who know God, how *unsearchable his judgments are, and his ways past finding out*, have so much Understanding, as not to sit in Judgment upon Providence, but to reverence what they do not understand. Which answers all the Objections against Providence, from some surprizing and unaccountable Events. Those who know God, know that he governs the World with such unsearchable Wisdom, as Creatures can give no Account of; especially Men in this imperfect State of Knowledge. Again, the Knowledge of God will give us so much Understanding, as not to question what we have all the Reason in the
World

12 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

World to believe he has revealed, nor to reject a Revelation as incredible, because we can frame no natural Notion or Idea of what is revealed. For he knows little or indeed Nothing of God, who thinks that the divine Knowledge must be measured by our natural Ideas, and that Nothing can be true which we cannot comprehend. In short, this is excellent Understanding, never to dispute with God either about the Works of Nature or Providence, or of Grace; the making or governing the World, or the Redemption of Mankind; which would put an End to the Objections of Atheists, Infidels, and Hereticks. And if we will allow that God knows more than we do, and can do Things which we cannot understand, there is an End of all such Disputes; and he knows Nothing of God that does not know that his Wisdom is infinite and incomprehensible.

This may suffice for the first Thing, That *the knowledge of God is understanding.*

But I must *secondly* show you, That *the fear of God is wisdom.* By *the fear of God*, I mean a great Fear of displeasing God, a great Awe and Reverence for his Justice and Power; and this itself is an excellent Part of Wisdom, and directs us in all Cases to the wisest Methods of Action.

As for the first, I need not say much to prove it; those who believe that there is a God, who is infinite in Power, and can do whatsoever

whatsoever he pleases, which it is certain that God who made the World can do; for his Creatures are all in his Power, and have no Power but what he gives, and what he takes away when he pleaseth; and therefore there is no Power in Nature that can resist his Will: I say, those who believe this, must think it a very foolish Thing to oppose themselves against God whom they cannot resist; and a wise Thing, the wisest Thing they can do, willingly and chearfully to submit to his Laws and Government.

It is certainly so foolish a Thing to oppose a Power we know must conquer; and it is so natural to submit to such an irresistible Power, that one would think it requires no great Wisdom to teach us to submit: But still it is a wise Thing to fear an Almighty Power; and the Number of those who do not, are so great, that it may pass for excellent Wisdom.

The Atheist may think himself excused from the Fear of God, because he believes there is no God to be afraid of; but this is Folly, both not to believe that there is a God, of which there are so many visible sensible Demonstrations; and not to fear that there may be one, since it is impossible that he should ever prove that there is none; and therefore runs such a Venture in it as no wise Man would run; especially when he bids open Defiance to God, and ridicules his Being and Worship. Other Sinners there

14 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

are who profess to believe that there is a God, but have no Awe and Reverence for him, but live as if there were no God, or that he took no Notice of what they did. This all thinking Men must acknowledge to be very great Folly and Madness; and when they themselves are charged with it, they make foolish Excuses for it; and such as too often they find to be foolish when it is too late, when they fall under the Vengeance of that God whom they would not fear and reverence. But he is the truly wise Man, who believes that there is a God to be feared, and lives in his Fear, if it be Wisdom not to provoke, but to make infinite Power our Friend. As to give some few Instances of this, which may serve to prove the Wisdom of this Religious Fear.

It is the highest Wisdom to secure our eternal Happiness; and this a just Fear and Reverence for God will teach us. Few Men have such an approved and confirmed Virtue, that they can conquer all the Temptations and Flatteries of the World without Fear; but a true Religious Fear of God makes Men wise unto Salvation; for what can tempt a Man to sin against God, who fears his Power and Justice, and has the dreadful Prospect of eternal Vengeance before him?

It is excellent Wisdom in the first Place to secure our greatest Interest, not to put the Salvation of our Souls upon the least Hazard; to do that in the first Place which must be done,

done, or we are miserable for ever; to *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*; not to delay our Repentance, and waste our youthful Strength and Vigor in Sin and Folly, upon the vain Hopes of repenting before we die; and sinning on till we sin away all Thoughts and Opportunities of Repentance: But *to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when he swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest.* This Wisdom the Fear of God teaches us, never to offend him, never to live one Moment under his Displeasure; never to be easy and satisfied, till we have made our Peace with him, and have good Hopes that our Sins are forgiven through the Merits and Mediation of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*; which no Man can have while he lives in Sin. To pretend to fear God, and to live in Sin, is a manifest Contradiction; for no Man will provoke him whom he fears; and no Man fears him whom he dares provoke. Such Men no more fear God at present, than they repent of their Sins at present; but they resolve to do both in Time; and they will certainly fear and repent together, if ever that Time comes. But whatever Reasons they may have for the Delays of their Repentance, they will never have more Reason to fear God hereafter than they have now, till they feel
his

16 *The Knowledge and Fear of God*

his Wrath; which, I doubt, is the only Thing that will teach them to fear him; for God is now what he always will be; and if all that we now know of God will not teach us the Wisdom to fear him, nor the Fear of God teach us the Wisdom of a present Repentance, I know not how we shall learn it, till we fear and repent without Hope.

Thus it is excellent Wisdom in Matters of such vast Concernment as the Salvation of our Souls, to take the safest and the surest Ways, not to try Experiments where every Miscarriage will prove fatal: We know a sure and certain Way how to make our Peace with God through our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*; that is, by Faith and Repentance, by forsaking all our Sins, and obeying all the Laws of the Gospel: This all Men allow to be a safe Way; and if we fear God it will teach us this Wisdom, to do that which we know will please him, and not to venture his Favour and the Salvation of our own Souls, upon uncertain and doubtful Expedients: Too many there are that do so, and find their Mistake when it is too late: All the several Arts of Superstition are such Expedients: Men find out different Ways to atone and appease God, without forsaking their Sins; but they are such Ways as God never appointed; the Gospel contains but one way of Salvation; and a Man who fears God will be so wise as to trust no other.

In

In short, it is the Fear of God alone which makes us wise for our Souls, wise for Eternity; which is the truest and best Wisdom, indeed the only Wisdom; for how crafty and subtle soever Men be, they are not Wise without it. To be Wise for this World, and to Perish for ever; to hunt after secular Riches and Honours, and *not to be rich towards God; not to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven; not to seek that honour which cometh of God,* is such Wisdom as is Foolishness with God. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee, and then whose shall all these things be?* Nay, indeed, there is no true Wisdom even with respect to this World, which is not directed and governed by the Fear of God, and makes all other things subordinate to our eternal Happiness. When Men carry on their Designs by wicked Arts, without any regard to the Laws of God, they commonly perplex and entangle themselves with endless Difficulties, meet with a thousand Disappointments, become the Sport of Fortune and the Scorn of the World. But though the Fear of God does not make all Men great Politicians, yet it makes them act safely, and concerns the Divine Providence for them, which is beyond all the Wisdom of the most crafty Politicians. He who makes the Divine Laws his Rule, and desires nothing but what he can have in the Observation of those Laws, how much so-

18 *The Knowledge and Fear of God, &c.*

ever he may fail in his Politicks, shall have the Favour and Protection of God in this World, and save his Soul in the next; and this I take to be the truest Wisdom.

Let us then possess our Souls with a religious Awe, and Reverence, and Fear of God; Let him be our Fear; Let him be our Dread; his Infinite Majesty and Greatness, his Irresistible Power, his Justice, his Holiness, his Goodness, his All-seeing Eye, and Sovereign Authority; make him the proper, the only Object of our Fear; this will deliver us from all other Fear, and carry us safe through this World to the Land of eternal Rest, where we shall see him without Fear, and rejoice in him for ever.



S E R M O N II.

Obedience the best Evidence of our
Love to God.

I JOHN V. 3.

*For this is the love of God, that we keep
his Commandments; and his Com-
mandments are not grievous.*

HOW essential a Part, at least, if it may
be called a Part, and not the Whole
of Religion, *the love of God* is, all Christians
readily acknowledge. Our Saviour tells us,
this is *the first and great Commandment, to
love the Lord our God with all our heart,
with all our soul, with all our mind, and with
all our strength*: And though he tells us of
a *second Commandment which is like unto it;
to love our neighbour as ourselves*, yet as far
as this is an Act of Religion, it necessarily
results from the Love of God. The Love of
God, and the Love of our Neighbour, are
Two Commandments, with relation to their
different Objects, but are one and the same in

20 *Obedience the best Evidence*

their Principle; for it is the Love of God alone which can inspire us with a true Religious Love to our Neighbour. This makes it the great Concernment of every Man, to know whether he truly loves God, or not; for there can be no true Religion, no well grounded Hope of enjoying God without it: And yet, as some Men state this, it is a Matter of such nice and curious Speculation, that it may be very hard to know whether we truly love God, or not. Some sensual Enthusiasts, who can heat their Imaginations into all Rapture and Extasy, shall flatter themselves, that they are the most passionate Lovers of God; while very sober and devout Christians, who heartily endeavour to please God in all things, for want of such Transports and Flames, or for want of pretending, as these Men do, to more than they feel, shall pass for dull and dead Formalists, who have nothing of the true Life and Spirit of Devotion.

And therefore to prevent all such dangerous Mistakes on both Sides, our Apostle gives us a double Character of the Love of God.

1. That to love God, is *to keep his Commandments*; to make all the Laws of God the Rules of our Lives and Actions. For by Commandments, he must mean all the Commandments of God; an universal Obedience and Holiness of Life; which is the only certain Trial of our Love to God, which a partial Obedience

dience is not: For Men may obey some of God's Laws out of private Interest and Inclination, and many Worldly and Temporal Reasons: But in this degenerate State of Human Nature, and corrupt State of the World, the Laws of God must in many Instances lie cross to the Lusts, and Passions, and Interests of Men; which nothing but the more powerful Love of God can subdue and conquer; and therefore nothing less than an universal Obedience to God's Laws, is a certain and infallible Mark of our Love to God.

The second Mark our Apostle gives us of our Love to God, is, That *his Commandments are not grievous*. I know very well, that this latter Clause, *his Commandments are not grievous*, is commonly cut off from the Context, and considered as an absolute and independent Proposition, *that the Commandments of God are not grievous*; but for what Reason I know not: For the Apostle plainly gives this as a Mark of our Love to God, and of the Increase and Perfection of our Love to God; he loves God who keeps all his Commandments, with what Difficulty soever it be: But then the Love of God is perfected in us, when it conquers all Sense of Difficulty, and makes those Laws which are most uneasy to Flesh and Blood, easy and pleasant, as the Instances and Expressions of our Love and Duty to God. And, after all that can

20 *Obedience the best Evidence*

their Principle; for it is the Love of God alone which can inspire us with a true Religious Love to our Neighbour. This makes it the great Concernment of every Man, to know whether he truly loves God, or not; for there can be no true Religion, no well grounded Hope of enjoying God without it: And yet, as some Men state this, it is a Matter of such nice and curious Speculation, that it may be very hard to know whether we truly love God, or not. Some sensual Enthusiasts, who can heat their Imaginations into all Rapture and Extasy, shall flatter themselves, that they are the most passionate Lovers of God; while very sober and devout Christians, who heartily endeavour to please God in all things, for want of such Transports and Flames, or for want of pretending, as these Men do, to more than they feel, shall pass for dull and dead Formalists, who have nothing of the true Life and Spirit of Devotion.

And therefore to prevent all such dangerous Mistakes on both Sides, our Apostle gives us a double Character of the Love of God.

1. That to love God, is *to keep his Commandments*; to make all the Laws of God the Rules of our Lives and Actions. For by Commandments, he must mean all the Commandments of God; an universal Obedience and Holiness of Life; which is the only certain Trial of our Love to God, which a partial Obedience

dience is not: For Men may obey some of God's Laws out of private Interest and Inclination, and many Worldly and Temporal Reasons: But in this degenerate State of Human Nature, and corrupt State of the World, the Laws of God must in many Instances lie cross to the Lusts, and Passions, and Interests of Men; which nothing but the more powerful Love of God can subdue and conquer; and therefore nothing less than an universal Obedience to God's Laws, is a certain and infallible Mark of our Love to God.

The second Mark our Apostle gives us of our Love to God, is, That *his Commandments are not grievous*. I know very well, that this latter Clause, *his Commandments are not grievous*, is commonly cut off from the Context, and considered as an absolute and independent Proposition, *that the Commandments of God are not grievous*; but for what Reason I know not: For the Apostle plainly gives this as a Mark of our Love to God, and of the Increase and Perfection of our Love to God; he loves God who keeps all his Commandments, with what Difficulty soever it be: But then the Love of God is perfected in us, when it conquers all Sense of Difficulty, and makes those Laws which are most uneasy to Flesh and Blood, easy and pleasant, as the Instances and Expressions of our Love and Duty to God. And, after all that can

22 *Obedience the best Evidence*

be said, this is the only thing that can make *the Commandments of God not grievous.*

There may indeed be a great deal said, why the Laws of God, in themselves considered, ought not to be thought grievous by us; because they contain the highest Reason, Justice, Equity, and Goodness; are most perfective of Human Nature; contribute most to the Ease and Contentment of our Lives in this World, and are the best Preparations and Dispositions to the Happiness of the next. But yet all this will not make them easy to Flesh and Blood, which have contrary Interests and Inclinations; as *St. Paul* tells us, *that the carnal mind is enmity with God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be,* Rom.viii. A plain and smooth Path is easy in itself, but not to a Man who has the Gout: And therefore our Saviour himself calls the Way to Heaven, that is, Obedience to the Commandments of God; a *strait gate*, and a *narrow way*, *which leadeth unto life*: And when he tells us, that *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*; yet he owns it to be a Yoke and a Burden still: Which does not signify all Ease; but it grows by degrees an easy Yoke, and a light Burden to those who come to him; who put themselves under his Government, under the Guidance and Conduct of his Spirit: Or, according to the Degrees of their Sanctification, that is, according to their Improvement in
the

the Love of God, so his Yoke grows easy, and his Burden light. My Business, therefore, at this present, shall be to shew you,

I. That our Love to God consists in *keeping his Commandments.* And

II. That the Perfection of our Love to God consists in this, That *his Commandments are not grievous.*

As for the first, there needs not many Words to convince any Man, that Obedience to the Commandments of God, is the most certain Mark and Evidence of our Love to God: That it is the Love of God, the proper and genuine Acts and Exercise of our Love of God. This is the Scripture Notion of the Love of God; which is always joined *with serving him, fearing him, cleaving to him, and walking before him with a perfect heart*; which is, *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength*; that is, to give up ourselves, our whole Man, absolutely and entirely to his Obedience and Service. The general Notion of Love, is a just Value and Esteem for Things, which will always have a proportionable Passion in it; but the Passion itself, and the Exercises of it, varies with the Nature and Relations of the Object. The Love we bear to our Wives and Children, and Friends, and to our Prince, come all under the same Denomination of

24 *Obedience the best Evidence*

Love ; but differ as much in their Kinds and Exercises, as these Relations themselves do ; as Natural Affection, Friendship, Honour, and Reverence differ. Our Love to our Princes does not consist in such a Fondness of Passion, as is between Natural Relations, nor in such familiar Endearments as are between Friends and Equals : But he only loves his Prince, as a Prince, who pays him all that Honour and Service which Subjects owe their Princes. And if we apply this to the Love of God, we shall soon be convinced, that to love God, is *to keep his Commandments* ; and that 'tis a vain thing to pretend to the Love of God without it.

According to this Rule, our Love to God must express itself in such a manner, as becomes those Relations which God stands in to us. We must love him in all his Relations ; and every Relation carries Duty and Obedience in it. As to shew you this very briefly.

God is the Great Creator of all Things, we owe our Being to him ; and all the good Things of this World, which make our Lives so easy and comfortable, are his Gift. Now all Men will grant, that he who made us has a Right and Title to our Obedience : And how can that Man pretend to love God as his Maker, who refuses to serve him ? Love may, and very often does, exceed the strict Measures

Measures of Duty, but never denies any just Right.

Thus in the Right of Creation, God is the Supreme and Sovereign Lord of the World; he is the Great Lawgiver, and the Absolute Disposer of all Events, who doth whatsoever pleaseth him both in Heaven and in Earth: So that if we love God, we must love him as our Lawgiver; and then we must love his Laws, and yield a ready and unreserved Obedience to them. Which the Psalmist so often appeals to, as the Trial of his Love to God: *O how I love thy law, it is my meditation day and night!* It is every where made the Character of the Enemies of God, that *they despise his laws, and cast them behind their backs.* If we love God as the absolute Lord and Sovereign of the World, the proper Exercise of this Love is in Reverence and Submission, to adore his Judgments, and trust God beyond our own Prospect of Things; to be easy and contented in every Condition; to thank him for all the Blessings we enjoy, and to bear all his Fatherly Corrections and Chastisements without repining. Thus all the Acts of Adoration and Devotion, are the most suitable Expressions of our Love to the Great Maker, and Sovereign Lord of the World, *who is worthy to be praised, and to be had in reverence of all those that are about him.* 'Twere easy to multiply Instances of this nature; for if we must love
God

26 *Obedience the best Evidence*

God in all his Relations to us, and every Relation carries some Duty in it, our Love to God must express itself in Affections suitable to such Relations; it is impossible to love God without keeping his Commandments; as God himself reasons with the *Jews*; *If I be a father, where is my honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?*

This is so very plain, that one would wonder that any Men can persuade themselves that they love God, who express very little or no Regard for his Laws: But the Truth is, these Men never consider the Relations God stands in to us, and we to God, nor what Expressions of Love, Affection, and Duty, such Relations require of them; but entertain themselves with some Speculations about the Divine Nature, and form a Glorious Idea in their Minds of a most perfect Being, of perfect Love and Goodness, Rectitude and Justice: And if they can but heighten their Passions, and fall in love with this Idea of God, this they call the Love of God; which may be, and very often is, consistent with a very wicked Life; especially when they draw the Picture of God just such as they would have it be; a very tender and compassionate Father, very kind and indulgent to Sinners, especially to his own Children who believe in him, and frequent all the Acts of Worship, and make a glorious Profession of Religion, though their Lives are not so good as they should

should be. If this were the Love of God, the Love of God might be separated from Keeping his Commandments: But though the Divine Perfections are the Objects of our Love and Adoration, yet they are so to us, as they are included and exercised in those Relations God stands in to us. And tho' Men may be enamoured with the abstracted Idea of a most perfect Being, without thinking themselves bound to obey him, yet the Love of a Wise, Good, Just, Holy Law-giver, and Sovereign Judge of the World, will convince Men, that the truest Expressions of our Love to such a Being, are to Obey and Serve him. This may suffice to shew you, that the Love of God is to keep his Commandments; and that those Men do but deceive themselves, whatever Raptures of Devotion they may feel in their Minds, who flatter themselves that they are very devout Lovers of God, without an universal Respect to all his Laws.

2dly. Another Mark and Evidence which the Apostle gives us of our Love to God, and of the Growth and Perfection of our Love, is, That how difficult soever many of the Laws of God are to Flesh and Blood, as it must be acknowledged that some of them are very difficult in this present State, yet the prevailing Love of God makes them easy; and that passionate Desire which we
have

28 *Obedience the best Evidence*

have in all things to please God, makes us think nothing difficult or uneasy, which will please him. It is sufficiently known, how extravagant the Powers of an Earthly and Sensual Love are; what it will do and suffer, without Murmuring or Complaining: And a Divine Love, according to its Degrees of Strength and Vigor, is much more powerful; as having more noble and ravishing Objects, and greater Encouragements to sweeten the greatest Difficulties. All Men do and must own, that it is an Argument of a prevailing Love to God, that we can yield a willing and chearful Obedience to his most difficult Laws. Not that the Love of God, in all Cases, conquers all Sense of Difficulty; which is such a State of Perfection, as few Men attain to in this World: But it so far conquers all Difficulties, that they are no Letts nor Hindrances to our Obedience; they do not tempt us to think that God deals hardly with us; but we quietly and chearfully submit our Wills, and Passions, and Inclinations, to the Will and Laws of God. But I must consider this a little more particularly; for the Love of God in the same Person prevails very differently, as the Cases differ.

As first. As averse as an Earthly and Sensual Nature is to all Acts of Religious Worship and Devotion, the Love of God does not only conquer the Difficulties of this, but
turns

turns it into the Divineſt Pleaſure. Nothing raviſhes the Soul of a true Lover of God more, than to think and meditate frequently on him; to contemplate his unconceivable Glories and Perfections; to praise him for all his Goodneſs and wonderful Works, eſpecially his *ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; to acquaint him with all our Wants, and to diſburden our Souls of all Cares and Fears, by caſting our Burden upon the Lord, who careth for us. This is the moſt eaſy and happy State of Mind; and the Exerciſe of ſuch Acts of Faith and Devotion, carry their own Pleaſures and Satisfactionſ with them. There are great Degrees of this, which increaſe in proportion to our Love: And as we feel the Joys and Pleaſures of Devotion increaſe, we may certainly conclude the Increaſe of our Love to God.

2dly. The Love of God meets with much greater Oppoſition from our Senſual Luſts and Paſſions. For even in good Men, tho' the Spirit be the predominant and governing Principle, yet the *fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh*; but as the Love of God increaſes, it by degrees eats out all theſe Earthly Affections, and makes the Fleſhly Principle more eaſily yield and ſubmit to the Government of the Spirit. While there is a Diſpute and Conteſt, we muſt acknowledge that there is ſome Difficulty;

30 *Obedience the best Evidence*

culty ; but a true Lover of God glories in conquering Difficulties, and finds the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction in sacrificing all his Earthly Inclinations to the Divine Pleasure and Will. And then the Commandments of God cannot be called grievous to him, when in every Encounter they yield him the Joys and Triumphs of Victory, and the new and transporting Evidences of the Love of God.

3dly, It is only the Love of God that can sweeten some of the most difficult Duties of Religion ; but a prevailing Love to God will make them easy, or at least not grievous. I shall instance at present only in the several Acts of Kindness and Beneficence to Men ; especially the Love of our Enemies, and Forgiving Injuries, whatever the Injury or Provocation has been. These are very hard Duties between Honour and Resentment, which have the greatest Power upon the greatest Minds. Men may reason long enough before they find any Natural Reason to conquer these Passions ; but to love, and to do good to all Men, even our Enemies, and those who hate and injure us for God's Sake, is a very prevailing Reason to all the sincere Lovers of God, and makes this Duty very easy to them, as it is an Expression of their Love to God. *God loved us while we were enemies, and sent his Son to die for us ;* and as many Sins as we are guilty of, for Christ's sake he forgives

forgives us all ; and in return for this, he requires us to *love our enemies*, and to forgive an Offending Brother : And though Men may not deserve this of us, yet certainly God does ; and if we are true Lovers of God, we shall not think it a difficult Expression of our Love to him.

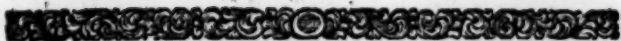
4thly, There is another Instance of the great Power of Love, beyond all this, and that is, That it conquers all the Fears and Terrors of the World, and makes us willingly and chearfully endure Shame, Reproach, and Sufferings, and the Loss of all Things, even of Life itself, for the sake of our dear Lord, *who loved us, and gave himself for us*. Many Examples we have of this nature both in the Old and New Testament ; and herein St. *John* places the Perfection of our Love. *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment : He that feareth, is not made perfect in love*, 1 John iv. 18. These must be confessed to be very difficult Trials, but not too difficult for a perfect Love to conquer.

To conclude then in a word: If you would approve yourselves to be true Lovers of God, you must shew your Love in all Acts of Duty and Obedience. Nothing will prove us to be true Lovers of God, nothing will be accepted by God, but this. Some devout Passions may easily be counterfeited, but an even and steady Course of Obedience to God,

32 *Obedience the best Evidence, &c.*

can never deceive us. Such Men Christ owns for his Friends, who do whatsoever he commands them. And this will translate us into those Blessed Regions of Love, to live and to rejoice for ever in the immediate Presence of the God of Love.

S E R-



S E R M O N III.

To be Doers of the Word, and not
Hearers only.

JAMES i. 22.

*But be ye Doers of the Word, and
not Hearers only, deceiving your
own selves.*

IT is strange to observe how jealous Men are of being imposed on in the little Concerns of this Life; with what a solicitous Care they guard themselves against all such Cheats and Impostures; and yet how easily they are deceived, and how apt they are to deceive themselves, in Matters on which their Eternal Happiness or Misery depends. One might reasonably expect, that those who believe another Life, where Good Men shall be eternally happy, and Bad Men eternally miserable, should above all things take care not to mistake their Way to Heaven, nor to suffer themselves to be misled into such By-paths as lead

VOL. II.

D

to

34 *To be Doers of the Word,*

to Destruction. And yet besides those vast Numbers, who take no care at all about these Matters, there are very many who take care the wrong way ; and, not liking the strait Gate and the narrow Way to Heaven, are ready to hearken to any Man who can direct them to a nearer and more pleasant Way, and venture their Souls upon it that they are in the right. Those frequent Cautions we meet with in the Scripture against being deceived, and deceiving ourselves, shew us that this was too common even in the Apostles days. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for as a man soweth, so shall he also reap, Gal. vi. 7. Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, 1 John iii. 7.* Thus in Verse 26. after my Text, the Apostle tells us of those *who deceive their own hearts*: And thus in my Text, those who are only Hearers and not Doers of the Word, are said to *deceive their own Souls*; *ἑαυτοῦς ἀπατάμενοι*, deceive themselves by false Reasonings into as false Hopes. And yet all these matters, wherein the Apostle takes notice that Men deceive themselves, are so plain and express in Scripture, that one would think it as impossible that Men should be able to deceive themselves in such Matters, as that they should be willing to be deceived. But it is the *ἀπάτη ἀμαρτίας*, as the Apostle calls it,
Heb.

Heb. iii. 13. the deceitfulness of sin, which deceives and hardens them too. That great Desire they have to reconcile a wicked Life with the Hopes of Heaven, makes some Men hope that they shall not reap as they have sown; and that though they sow to the flesh, they shall not of the flesh reap corruption; or that they may be righteous without doing Righteousness; or that if they be Hearers of the Word, Sound and Orthodox Believers, this will recommend them to God, and to their Saviour, without Doing, without Obeying, the Laws of the Gospel. I know not how it is possible to undeceive these Men, but by shewing them by what false Reasonings they deceive themselves. For reason they do, and that very falsely, as the Apostle signifies in his ἀπαλογιζόμενοι. And this I shall do as plainly and briefly as I can.

The Apostle, in my Text, joins Hearing and Doing the Word, Faith and Obedience, as both necessary to our Acceptance with God. For the Apostle, in the Verse before my Text, tells us, That we must *receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls:* Ἐμφύλον λόγον; which signifies, that the Word must be planted in our Hearts, and take deep Root there, that it may bring forth the genuine Fruits of Holiness and Obedience. Therefore Knowledge and Faith is absolutely necessary, that

36 *To be Doers of the Word,*

we may do the Will of God. But then, in the Verses after my Text, he shews us how useless this Faith and Knowledge is, without Obedience: *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beboldeth himself, and goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* That is, this is a useless vanishing Knowledge, which leaves no Impression, no sensible and lasting Effects behind it. But it is both Hearing and Doing, which must make a complete and perfect Christian, and entitle us to the Reward: *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein; he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed.* He who with great Diligence and Application of Mind, *ἀγρίψας*, like a Man who stoops down, and looks close and near, hears, and reads, and studies the Gospel of Christ, that perfect Law of Liberty, which makes us free from the Law of Sin and Death, and so continues to fix these Thoughts in his Mind, as neither to forget his Duty, nor to neglect to do it; such a Man shall be blessed in his Deed. So that here are two sorts of Men who abuse and deceive themselves with these false Reasonings. 1. Those who think it sufficient to hear the Word without Doing; who hope to be saved by Faith with-

without Obedience. 2. Those who think, if they do some good Actions, and are good Men in the main, they need not much trouble themselves about Hearing, or about Faith. That both these are deceived, I shall not now go about to prove; for to any Man who has read the Gospel, this is too plain to need a Proof; and our Apostle in my Text expressly declares, that they are deceived. But I must consider by what false and perverse Reasonings, both these sorts of Men deceive themselves.

1st. Then to begin with the Hearers, those who value themselves upon their Faith and Knowledge, both which come by Hearing, without any great Care to do the Will of God. For by Hearers only, the Apostle does not understand such Men as are concerned for nothing but to hear; who think that Faith and Knowledge alone, without any Regard to the Practice of the Christian Life, shall carry them to Heaven: Which is so very absurd, that it is hard to think that any Men can so far deceive themselves. But those may be called Hearers only, whose principal Care it is to hear, and know, and believe; and hope that their Increase in Faith and Knowledge, will excuse the other great Neglects and Miscarriages of their Lives; who will, like *Herod* at the Preaching of *John* the Baptist, do a

38 *To be Doers of the Word,*

great many Things, what they can do with the most Ease, or the the least Violence to their Natural Inclinations, and beloved Lusts; but think to compound with God for their other Sins, by a more perfect Knowledge, and Orthodox Faith. For they cannot persuade themselves, that God will finally reject such knowing Christians, and sound Believers. Most Men are apt to value themselves more upon the Perfection of their Knowledge, and some curious Speculations in Divine Mysteries, and a great and flaming Zeal in vindicating the true Orthodox Faith, than upon a Holy Life; because this eminently distinguishes them from the ordinary Rank of Christians, who may live better, but know a great deal less than they do; and then flatter themselves that God values this, and them for it, as much as they value themselves.

Now I readily grant, That true Faith and Knowledge are very valuable Things; the great Perfection and Ornaments of the Understanding, and of admirable use to make a perfect and consummate Christian. But that which gives the true Value to Faith and Knowledge, is that powerful Influence which they have, or ought to have, upon the Government of our Lives; to make our Obedience as perfect as our Knowledge, and our Lives as Orthodox as our Faith: And therefore a barren Faith, and
unfruitful

unfruitful Knowledge, are in themselves worth nothing. Devils are very knowing Spirits, and they believe and tremble also, but are Devils still: and if they were flung down from Heaven with all their bright and sparkling Knowledge, an empty and fruitless Faith and Knowledge will never carry us up to Heaven. How should we despise that Man, who values a Servant, and makes him his Favourite, because he knows how to serve him better than others do, and can discourse very skilfully about any Business, but will do nothing, or only just what he pleases? Our Saviour assures us, that he will reject all such Pretenders. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Matt. vii. 21.* And elsewhere he tells us, *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more, Luke xii. 47, 48.* This is a common Rule of Justice and Equity among Men, and therefore Knowledge will not excuse, but aggravate both the Guilt and

38 *To be Doers of the Word,*

great many Things, what they can do with the most Ease, or the the least Violence to their Natural Inclinations, and beloved Lusts; but think to compound with God for their other Sins, by a more perfect Knowledge, and Orthodox Faith. For they cannot persuade themselves, that God will finally reject such knowing Christians, and sound Believers. Most Men are apt to value themselves more upon the Perfection of their Knowledge, and some curious Speculations in Divine Mysteries, and a great and flaming Zeal in vindicating the true Orthodox Faith, than upon a Holy Life; because this eminently distinguishes them from the ordinary Rank of Christians, who may live better, but know a great deal less than they do; and then flatter themselves that God values this, and them for it, as much as they value themselves.

Now I readily grant, That true Faith and Knowledge are very valuable Things; the great Perfection and Ornaments of the Understanding, and of admirable use to make a perfect and consummate Christian. But that which gives the true Value to Faith and Knowledge, is that powerful Influence which they have, or ought to have, upon the Government of our Lives; to make our Obedience as perfect as our Knowledge, and our Lives as Orthodox as our Faith: And therefore a barren Faith, and
unfruitful

unfruitful Knowledge, are in themselves worth nothing. Devils are very knowing Spirits, and they believe and tremble also, but are Devils still: and if they were flung down from Heaven with all their bright and sparkling Knowledge, an empty and fruitless Faith and Knowledge will never carry us up to Heaven. How should we despise that Man, who values a Servant, and makes him his Favourite, because he knows how to serve him better than others do, and can discourse very skilfully about any Business, but will do nothing, or only just what he pleases? Our Saviour assures us, that he will reject all such Pretenders. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven,* Matt. vii. 21. And elsewhere he tells us, *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more,* Luke xii. 47, 48. This is a common Rule of Justice and Equity among Men, and therefore Knowledge will not excuse, but aggravate both the Guilt and

40 *To be Doers of the Word,*

Punishment of our Disobedience. As he tells the *Pharisees*, John ix. 41. *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth.*

But let us suppose true Faith and Knowledge to be never so meritorious and acceptable to God, yet such a Faith and Knowledge as does not make us good Men, is not true Faith and Knowledge. Such Men, in Scripture, are said not to know God, who do not obey him. As the Sons of *Eli*, are said to be *Sons of Belial*, who knew not the Lord; not because they were perfectly ignorant of the God of *Israel*, but were very wicked; 1 Sam. ii. 12. Thus St. *John* tells us, 1 John ii. 3, 4. *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

For can that Man have a true Notion of the Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Goodness of God, who does not love, and honour, and reverence, and obey him? Does he understand the Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness of the Divine Nature, who thinks that he can upon any Terms be reconciled to impenitent and unreformed Sinners? who, instead of a wise and perfect Goodness, clothes God with all the weak and fond Passions of Human Nature, and thinks that he may be flattered

flattered and careſſed into a good Opinion of Bad Men? Has that Man a true Faith and Knowledge of the Myſtery of our Redemption by Chriſt, who hopes to be ſaved by his Faith and Knowledge, without a Renewed and Sanctified Nature, and Holineſs of Life? which is ſo direct a Contradiction to the whole Doctrin and Deſign of the Goſpel. As the true End of Faith and Knowledge is the Worſhip and Obedience of God and our Saviour, ſo this is the natural and almoſt neceſſary Effect of a true Faith and Knowledge; and this alone is that Faith and Knowledge which will recommend us to God. It is certain, that Man is not a true Believer, who can take any Comfort in believing and not obeying the Goſpel. For what Comfort is it for Bad Men to believe that there is ſuch a Place as Heaven, where Good Men ſhall be eternally happy, if they believe alſo, that *the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*? What Comfort is there in an Orthodox Belief of the Eternity of Hell Torments, if they believe alſo, that they are prepared for Hypocrites, and wicked Chriſtians, that they may be puniſhed with the Devil and his Angels? The very Fear of this, makes a great many Infidels; that it is impoſſible that any Bad Man ſhould profeſs this Faith, without a great Mixture

42 *To be Doers of the Word,*

Mixture of Blindness, and Ignorance, and Infidelity.

This will plainly appear, if we consider what it is which deceives wicked Believers into these secure Hopes of being saved by Christ. Christ himself frequently requires us to believe in his Name for Life and Salvation, and so do all his Apostles; and *St. Paul* in his Disputes with the *Jews*, every where attributes our Justification to Faith in Christ, to Faith in his Blood; and that in opposition to Justification by Works: And tho' it is evident enough, that in many Places by the Works of the Law, he means the Works of the *Mosaical* Law, all the Rites and Ceremonies of it, in which the *Jews*, against whom he disputed, placed their Righteousness; yet there are many Expressions which look further, even to the Righteousness of the Moral, as well as Ceremonial Law. For the Moral Law was not only a Part, but the most essential Part of the Law of *Moses*. Thus it is plain the *Jews* understood his Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and Justification freely by his Grace through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and Justification by Faith in his Blood, as opposed to Justification by Works; from whence they drew that wicked Inference, that Believers might live as wickedly as they pleased. Which *St. Paul* takes notice of, and answers, in the vi^b of the

and not Hearers only. 43

the Romans : *What shall we say then ; shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? God forbid : How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?* Ver. 1, 2. That is, though we are justified freely by the Grace of God, and through Faith in the Blood of Christ, yet our very Profession of Christianity obliges us to all Holy Obedience ; as he proves in the following Verses, from the Nature of our Baptismal Vow, and the external Form and Ceremonies of Baptism, which represent our Death and Burial with Christ, and our Rising with him into a new Spiritual Life.

Nay, even in those Days many Christians seem to have run into the very same Mistake ; which made St. James warn them against it, in the ii^d of James ; where he shows us how useless this Faith is without Works ; and expressly tells us, *That Abraham was justified by Works ; Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works Faith was made perfect : And thus the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God,* 14—23. I shall not now take notice how this Dispute about Justification by Faith and Works has been managed to this Day, and made a very perplexing Controversy ; for when it is truly stated, nothing is more plain.

We

44 *To be Doers of the Word,*

We are justified by the Faith of Christ, by Faith in his Blood; for we must be saved only by his Name, as his Disciples, and the Members of his Body; this justifies us, that is, puts us into a state of Justification, into a state of Peace and Reconciliation with God: *For being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1. That is, in short, we are admitted into the Covenant of Grace and Mercy, which is the Purchase of Christ's Blood, the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant: And this is wholly owing to our Faith in him, which makes us the Members of his Body. But then this state of Justification gives us only a Covenant-Right to Pardon and Forgiveness; we have a Right to Pardon and Forgiveness upon the Terms of the Gospel, which those have not, who do not own and profess the Faith of Christ: But we must obey all the Laws of our Saviour, if we would be owned by him, and would be accepted in him; which is that Evangelical Righteousness, upon which our final Justification and Absolution by our Saviour, when he shall come to judge the World, depends: He owns none for his Disciples, but those who obey him; and none shall be finally pardoned and rewarded, but those whom he owns. Whatever Profession we make of the Faith of Christ, if we have not the true Marks and Characters of his Disciples on us, if we are

not renewed and sanctified by his Spirit, he will say unto us at that Day, *Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, I know ye not.* This St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, gives a plain and short Account of, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* That is, this is the final Decree and Determination of God concerning the Salvation of Men; That the Lord, that is Christ, who is the Great Judge of Mankind, knoweth who are his sincere Disciples; and all such shall be pardoned and rewarded by him, and received into the Kingdom of his Father. This is our Justification by Faith, which makes us his, the Members of his Body. But then if we would know who are his, whom he will thus own and reward with immortal Life, it follows in the next words, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* Christ will justify and save all that are his, but owns none to be his, but those who *depart from iniquity.* This shows us that we are justified by Faith alone, not by the Works of Righteousness which we have done; it is Faith alone which gives us a Covenant-Right to Pardon and Forgiveness, but this brings us under the Obligations of all Holy Obedience, if we would be finally owned, pardoned, and rewarded by our Saviour: Which reconciles
Justification

46 *To be Doers of the Word,*

Justification by Faith alone, with the Necessity of a Holy Life; and may satisfy us, how much those Men deceive themselves, who are *Hearers only, and not Doers of the Word.*

2dly. There are others who deceive themselves in the contrary Extreme; who think nothing necessary to Salvation but Holiness and Obedience: And because Faith cannot save us without a holy Life, they grow very indifferent what they believe, if they take care to live well. Some Men improve this so far, as to despise all Revelation and all Faith: For the natural Belief of a God and a Providence, and the Differences of Good and Evil, and the Rewards and Punishments of the next Life, they think sufficient to make them good Moral Men, and they need no more to make them happy. Others, who do own the necessity of believing the Gospel of Christ, excuse themselves from believing Mysteries, which they cannot comprehend, if they believe enough to direct and govern their Lives. And thus they either reject, or are very indifferent, to the belief of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Satisfaction of Christ. Which, how true soever they may be, they think the Belief of them not absolutely necessary to Salvation; because they may obey the Laws of the Gospel, and be very good Men, without believing them. And a Zeal for useless Opinions

nions and Speculations, is nothing but Bigotry ; for which they despise and condemn the Ancient Christians and primitive Fathers, who contended so earnestly for the Faith *which was once delivered unto the Saints.* But this gives a very ill Character of the Gospel of our Saviour, as if all the peculiar Doctrines of it were very useless and unnecessary to be believed. And it must seem strange to any considering Man, that if these Doctrines be true, the Belief of them should not be necessary : That if God did send his only Begotten and Eternal Son into the World, in human Nature, to suffer Death upon the Cross for our Redemption, and to make a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World ; yet it should not be necessary to believe, either that Christ is the Eternal Son of God Incarnate, or that his Death was, in a proper Sense, a Propitiatory Sacrifice and Expiation for Sin. For if they can be saved without this Belief, they might as well have been saved without the Incarnation and Death of Christ, which can be of no use if it be not and need not be believed. This may satisfy us, that these Men are under a very great Mistake ; but it will be necessary briefly to consider what their Mistake is.

Now their Mistake in short is this, That they forget the principal part of Christ's Under-

48 *To be Doers of the Word,*

Undertaking for us ; which was to make an Atonement and Expiation for our Sins, to Reconcile God to us, and to Seal the New Covenant of Grace and Mercy with his own Blood, by Death to Conquer Death, and to give Mankind a new Right and Title to Immortal Life: Nay, he came not only to Reconcile God to us, but to Reconcile us to God ; to heal the Weaknesses and Corruptions, and to renew and sanctify our Natures, by the powerful Influences of his Grace and Spirit; to *redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good Works.* This is the true Notion of his being our Saviour, that he saves us from our Sins; that is, that he makes Atonement for them, and delivers us from the Wrath of God and the Curse of the Law ; and, which is as necessary as his Atonement and Expiation for Sin, gives us the Victory over it by his renewing and sanctifying Grace; *that we being dead to sin may henceforth serve God in newness of life.* This is the Gospel which he preached, and which we must believe : We must believe in him as our Saviour, as our great High Priest, and Sacrifice; and we must believe him to be such a Saviour as he really was, the Eternal Son of God Incarnate, who expiated our Sins by his own Blood ; For as his Blood made the Expiation, so we must be justified by Faith in his Blood.

Which

Which is a plain Proof how necessary the Belief of the Divinity, and Incarnation, and Satisfaction of our Saviour is ; unless we can be saved by a holy Life, without any Sacrifice or Expiation for Sin ; or by a Creature, Priest and Sacrifice. Thus we must as much depend upon the constant Supplies of Grace for our Spiritual Life, to enable us to conquer this World, and all the Temptations of it, as we do upon the Providence of God for our Being and Subsistence in this World : And if it be Faith only that entitles us to these Divine Assistances, we must believe that our Saviour has this Power and Authority to bestow this Holy Spirit on us ; and that this Holy Spirit which is a kind of an universal Soul to the Christian Church, to animate and inspire it with all Divine Knowledge and Divine Perfections, is the Eternal Spirit of God. Had nothing more been necessary to make us good Men, and to carry us to Heaven, but to be perfectly instructed in the Rules of good Living, and to be assured of the Rewards and Punishments of the next Life, as the great Motives and Encouragements of our Obedience, no other Faith in Christ had been necessary but only to have believed him a true Prophet, who came to reveal the whole Will of God. But if the Atonement of our Sins, and the Sanctification of our Natures, be much more necessary than the bare Knowledge of

50 *To be Doers of the Word,*

God's Will, and the moral Arguments of our Obedience; there is something more also necessary to be believed than what will barely inform us of our Duty, and furnish us with very persuasive Arguments to do it. And yet, if we consider only the Motives to Obedience, the true Christian Faith furnishes us with more persuasive and powerful Arguments, than any which Nature or Philosophy can teach. The Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God, is such a Manifestation of God's Love to Sinners, and therefore such an Encouragement to Repentance, as the World never had before: The Expiation and Atonement of Christ's Death, gives us greater Assurance of our Pardon, than a bare Promise could do, because it is the Price of our Redemption: And the Love of God in giving his Son, and the Love of Christ in becoming Man and Dying for us, has a more constraining Force and Power, than the mere natural Love and Goodness of God in making and governing the World: The constant Assistances of the Divine Grace and Spirit, is a great Encouragement to us to *fight manfully under Christ's banner, against the world, the flesh, and the devil*; and *his intercession for us at God's right hand*, secures us of the daily Supplies of his Grace, and of the Pardon of our daily Infirmities. These are all very great Encouragements to a holy Life, which
those

those Men want who disbelieve these great Articles of the Christian Faith. Which may convince us how necessary it is to hear and believe all the Doctrines of the Gospel, as well as to obey the Laws of it. Hearing and Believing without Obeying will not save us ; nor can Holiness and Obedience save us without Faith in the Blood of Christ, which makes the Atonement ; nor can the mere force of Reason and moral Arguments sanctify our Natures, and make us such new Creatures as shall enter into Heaven. But let us hear and believe, and daily improve in Grace and Knowledge, and in Holiness and Obedience ; and thus an abundant Entrance shall be administered to us into his heavenly Kingdom.

those Men want who are in the great
Articles of the Church. I have
may convince us how necessary it is to have
and believe all the Doctrines of the Church
as well as to do the Duty of the Church
and Believing without Obedience will not
save us; nor can Holiness and Obedience
save us without Faith in the Lord of Comfort
which makes the Sacrament; nor can the
mere force of Reason and moral Arguments
sanctify our Natures, and make us such
new Creatures as shall enter into Heaven.
But let us hear and believe, and daily im-
prove in Grace and Knowledge; and in Hol-
iness and Obedience; and thus an abundant
Furnace shall be administered to us into the
Heavenly Kingdom.



S E R M O N IV.

Confession and Sorrow for Sin.

P S A L M xxxviii. 18.

*For I will declare mine iniquity; I
will be sorry for my sin.*

THIS is the Language of a true Penitent, what every Sinner ought to say and do, who hopes to obtain Mercy from God; and therefore it nearly concerns us all rightly to understand this Matter, and to apply it seriously to ourselves. I shall not spend time in considering the Context, nor what the Occasion of Penning this Psalm was: It appears to any one who reads it, that the *Psalmist* was at this time under a great Sense of Guilt, but not without Hope of Mercy; and the most effectual way he could take to recover the Peace of his own Mind, and the good Hopes in God, was the Resolution in my Text, *I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.* Which I shall at present explain to you.

E 3

1. To

54 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

1. To declare his Iniquity, or to acknowledge and confess his Sins, to God we may be sure; for Repentance does not require us to make all our Secret Sins public, and to declare to all the World how wicked we have been. This would serve no good End in Religion, but many bad ones: We see too much already of the Wickedness of Mankind; but were all the secret Faults and Follies even of good Men made public, what Advantage would this give to the Enemies of God and of Religion? How would it encourage bad Men in their Wickedness, and weaken the Authority of wise Counsels, and virtuous Examples? For whatever Allowances a Merciful God may make for the Failings and Miscarriages of good Men, the World will make none. Christian Charity obliges us to conceal the Miscarriages of our Brethren, as far as we may and can; not to propagate ill Stories, by telling all the bad things that we know or ever heard of them; and then certainly Repentance does not require us to publish our own Faults, to the Scandal of Religion, and to the Loss of our Reputation: which is not easily recovered in a wicked and ill natured World.

When those Sins which we have committed in the Dark, and with all the Arts of Secresy, are brought to light, as the Divine Providence very often orders they shall be,
our

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 55

our Confession and Repentance must then be as public as our Sin has been; but in other Cases we may and ought to conceal them from Men, if we confess them to God. Or when our Sins are injurious to our Brother, Confession in many Cases may be as necessary as Restitution is, to repair the Injury we have done, and to beg his Pardon; and then we must confess our Faults one to another: But no Man in ordinary Cases has a Right to know our Hearts and Thoughts, and the Secrets of our Lives. The Church of *Rome* indeed makes every Priest a Judge, and the judicial Absolution of the Priest necessary to our Pardon; and in consequence of this, makes Confession to a Priest necessary too: For how can a Priest absolve Men from their Sins, if he knows not what they are? and how can he know Men's secret Sins without their Confession? But this the *Psalmist* knew nothing of, nor the Christian Church for many Ages. It may be of great use in some extraordinary Cases, to confess our Sins to our Spiritual Guides, to obtain their Ghostly Advice and Counsel; but the Power of the Keys was to receive into, or to shut out of the Church; not to unlock the Breasts and Cabinets of Princes, the Secrets of Families, nay, the Secrets of every Man's Heart, which is such a Knowledge as no Creature ought to be intrusted with; and therefore God hath reserved it to himself,

56 Confession and Sorrow for Sin.

who searches the Heart, and trieth the Reins of the Sons of Men.

And yet one would think there should be little Reason to confess our Sins to God who knows them all: And if indeed to confess our Sins, signified no more than to inform God what Sins we had committed, this were a very needless thing: for we cannot conceal ourselves nor our Wickedness from God; there is no Darkness nor shadow of Death where the Workers of Iniquity can hide themselves. But to confess our Sins to God, is to expresse that great Sense we have of our own Wickedness, how much we are ashamed of our Sins, and how heartily we are sorry for them. To confess our Sins in Scripture, is opposed to hiding and covering them; *Proverbs xxviii. 13. Who so covereth his sins shall not prosper; but who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* Psalm xxxii. 5. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* But how can Men hide their Sins from God? Not so as that he shall not know them; no Man who believes a God, that he is present with him in all Places, in whom he lives and moves, and has his Being, can flatter himself with such vain Hopes: But there are too many, who though they know themselves to be Sinners, and know that
that

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 57

that God knows them to be so, yet will not go to God with all Humility of Mind, nor acknowledge their Wickedness, and beg his Pardon with a broken and contrite Heart; and this is to hide their Sins as much as they can hide them; that is, they will not own themselves to be Sinners. A great many such ill Men there are in the World, who make no scruple to injure their Friends and Neighbours, but scorn to acknowledge a Fault, and to beg Pardon. But one would think it impossible that any Men should thus harden themselves against God, the Sovereign Lord and Judge of the World, to whom they must give an Account of their Actions, whether they will or no, and receive the just Rewards of them. The true Reason of this seems to be, that Men are naturally sensible, if they confess their Sins to God, it must be with Shame and Sorrow, and serious Resolutions of Amendment; that to do otherwise is an impious Affront to God, as truly it is; and yet this they are not yet resolved on; and therefore think it reasonable to delay the Confession of their Sins, as they do their Repentance: And so far they are in the right: But then they ought to consider, how dangerous it is to delay either. If we believe ourselves to be Sinners, and believe that God knows all our Sins, what good Reason can there ever be for our Confessing our Sins to God,
which

58 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

which is not a good Reason to do it now? You may think it too soon to forsake your Sins, but is it too soon to obtain your Pardon, which you can never have without an humble and penitent Confession of your Sins?

There are too many others in the contrary Extreme, who are as bad Men as these are or can be; but then they never hide their Sins, but take care to confess them every day to God, and that in the most Tragical Expressions, and with all the Appearance of the bitterest Remorse; but as soon as their Eyes are dry, they think all is well, and their Pardon certainly sealed in Heaven: And now they Sin on upon a new Score, the next Opportunity that offers, and know how to make themselves whole again; it is but repeating their Confession and Tears, and their hypocritical Promises, and they are as safe as ever. Now it is not easy to determine which of these are the worst Men, but these confessing Sinners seem to be in the most hopeless State. Those who have so much Sense and Modesty, that they dare not affront God with hypocritical Confessions, till they are heartily ashamed and sorry for their Sins, and resolve by the Grace of God to forsake them, may possibly, at one time or other, prove true Penitents; their Consciences may at one time or other be so thoroughly awakened, that they

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 59

they shall not be able to resist the Conviction, nor to harden themselves against the Terrors of the Lord: But when Men have got into a secure Round of Sinning and Confessing, and repeating their Sins and Confessions as often as Occasion serves, there is little hopes that they should ever prove true Penitents; that is, that they should ever forsake their Sins. They flatter themselves that they are such Penitents as God will forgive, if they confess their Sins as often as they commit them; and such Men will confess on, but will never forsake them.

But then there are other Men, who, tho' they do not hope to conceal their Sins from God, yet endeavour to hide them from themselves; that is, who will not own what they do to be wicked, or will greatly lessen the Guilt of what they do, or make a great many Excuses and Apologies, to justify themselves from the Guilt of it. There are few things so bad, but what some Men will attempt to justify, though they *call good evil, and evil good*. There are few Sins but what Men have something to say, at least in their own particular Cases, to lessen the Guilt of them; and few Men are without their Excuses, though in the last Result they charge their Sins upon God himself. Now such Men never can confess their Sins, as true Penitents ought to do; because
2 they

60 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

they will not own themselves to be so guilty as really they are; and those who hide their Sins from themselves, the necessary Consequence of it is, that they hide them from God too: That they either do not confess such Sins to God, which, tho' they are very great Sins, they will not own to be Sins; or that they do not confess them with such Shame and Sorrow, as such Sins deserve. This is to declare our Iniquity, to confess our Wickedness, our Guilt, and our whole Guilt to God; and to take Shame and Confusion of Face to ourselves.

2dly. Let us now more particularly enquire what it is to be sorry for our Sins: For Sorrow for Sin, though it be not the whole of Repentance, yet is an essential part, and the necessary Principle of it: It is this Godly Sorrow *which worketh repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of.* It is this which makes the Confession of our Sins an Act of Repentance, that we confess them with Shame and Sorrow.

I need not tell you what Sorrow is, this is best known by feeling, and we have all of us too many Occasions to feel what it is; and the Natural Passion is the same in the Sorrows of Repentance, though the Object and the Reason of it differs. Worldly Men are afflicted with some Worldly Losses, Disappointments, and Sufferings; a Penitent is sorry for his Sins. But if we would judge truly

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 61

truly whether our Sorrow for Sin be sincere, and such as God will accept, we must distinguish between the Rational and Sensitive part of Sorrow; for all Rational Passions, and such the Sorrow of Repentance must be, result from the Reason of our Minds, and that Judgment that we make of Things. As to consider this particularly.

1st. The Rational Part of Sorrow is a Rational Dislike of what we have done, and a Displeasure at ourselves for doing it: When upon a sober and deliberate Judgment we condemn what we have done, and condemn ourselves for it. This is an inward Pain and Grief of Mind, and the only Thing which gives Value to the Sorrows of Repentance; and the different Reasons for which we dislike and disapprove of what we have done, make our Repentance more or less perfect.

As 1. The Reason of some Men's Sorrow for Sin, is that terrible Vengeance which God has threatened against them; Lakes of Fire and Brimstone; Blackness of Darkness; the Worm that never dieth, and the Fire that never goeth out. When Men are heartily persuaded of this, and see what Danger they are in, how fond soever they may be of their Sins upon other accounts, they must dislike and condemn them when they see Death and Hell in their Retinue; they must condemn themselves of the greatest

62 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

est Folly and Distraction, to chuse Death and all the Miseries of it, for the short and perishing Enjoyments of Sin. This is commonly the first Step to this Godly Sorrow: When Men are grown in love with Sin, nothing but a more powerful Fear can conquer this Love: It will be in vain to reason and persuade such Men out of their Sins, unless you can fright them to it. *But knowing the terrors of the Lord, saith St. Paul, we persuade men.*

And here I meet with Two Extremes.

1. Some will not allow this to be a true Godly Sorrow, which is owing merely to the Fear of Hell. This, they say, is the Spirit of the Law, not of the Gospel; not the Spirit of Sons, which is more afflicted for fear of displeasing our Heavenly Father, than for fear of Punishment: And I readily grant, that this is the lowest and most imperfect State of Repentance; but it is a Beginning, and a very good Beginning too, if it separate us from our Sins, and *bring forth fruit meet for repentance.* The Gospel contains Threatnings as well as Promises; for our Lord knew, that Fear works more powerfully upon Men's Minds than Hope does: And if Fear be a Gospel-Principle of Repentance and Obedience, our Lord will accept such Penitents as begin their Repentance with the Fear of Hell: Or else, why did he warn Men, to *fly from the wrath*

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 63

wrath to come? Why did he threaten Hell-fire against impenitent Sinners? Neither Fear, nor Hope, in themselves, are a true Gospel-Principle of Obedience; but the Fear and Hope of Things absent and unseen, of future Rewards and Punishments in the next World, are. For this is a Life of Faith, which makes us acceptable to God, and is the true Christian Principle of all Holy Obedience.

2dly. Others run into the contrary Extreme, and will not allow that a Man can be a true Penitent, who has not felt the Terrors of the Law, and the Spirit of Bondage, as they call it. For they say, that no Man has a right to lay hold of Christ for Salvation, till he is terrified, and even distracted with the Sense of God's Justice, and the Severity of the Law, and the endless Punishments of the Damned; till he has passed through all the imaginary Scenes of Contrition, Compunction, and Humiliation, and is reduced to an utter Despair in himself; and then he may look up to Christ, and see all the Demands of the Law satisfied, and the Justice of God atoned, and the Righteousness of the Law fulfilled by Christ in his stead, and *imputed unto him for righteousness.*

But what need of all this? Why must Christians be brought under the Law, when the Apostle tells us, that *we are not under the law, but under grace?* If Christ has sealed

64 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

sealed the Gospel-Covenant in his Blood, that puts an end to the Law. And though the Gospel threatens Hell-fire against impenitent Sinners, yet at the same time it promises Forgiveness and Heaven to Penitents. No Man needs despair of Mercy, but may at once repent of his Sins, and be assured of the Forgiveness of them, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ. If the Fear of Hell make him a true Penitent, the Promises of the Gospel will at the same time deliver him from all these Legal Terrors.

2dly. The Moral Evil of Sin, its Contrariety to the Holy and Pure Nature of God, and to the Honour and Perfection of Human Nature; is a better Reason still for Godly Sorrow. This turns our Fear of Sin into Aversion and Self-abhorrence. Such a Man has recovered some degree of Spiritual Life; he feels the Shame of Sin, as well as fears its Punishment. He abhors the Sin out of a Love of Virtue; which is the most perfect Principle of Aversion, the very same Reason for which God hates Sin. And as this Sense in us increases, so our Sorrow for Sin grows every day more divine, till it turns into perfect Antipathy; which is always Nature, not Art: And there cannot be a more perfect Abhorrence of Sin than to abhor it from a Principle of renewed and sanctified Nature: For the best Reason for
hating

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 65

hating Sin, is, because we are, and are resolved to be Good Men.

3^{dly}. This will improve our Dislike of Sin, into an ingenuous filial Sorrow for Offending God, our Maker, our Father, our Redeemer : Which, though it has nothing of Terror and Frightfulness in it, is the most soft and melting Passion. It upbraids us with our Ingratitude, and makes every Instance and Expression of the Divine Goodness wound us deeper than his Terrors do. Are these fit Returns to be made to him who gave us our Being, and hath provided for us ever since ; and hath sent his own Son into the World to redeem and save us ? Would we use an Earthly Parent, or an Earthly Friend thus ? How should we like to be used thus by our own Children or Dependents, whom we have nourished and protected with the most tender and solicitous Regard ? We are apt to be overpowered by such Resentments, and to cast off the Care of such Rebellious Children, and ungrateful Clients : But God is more merciful to his Prodigals ; and the better Men are, the more they love God, and the more sensible they are of God's Love to them, the more affectionate are all the Sorrows of Repentance ; and the Grief for offending God our Merciful Father, is the very Perfection of Godly Sorrow. This gives an account of the Rational Part of Godly Sorrow,

66 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

without some degree of which no Man is a true Penitent. It may begin in a Fear of Hell, but as we improve in true Goodness, that improves also into a Diviner Passion, into a Shame and Abhorrence of Sin, for the Moral Evil and Pollution of it, and into a true Filial Sorrow for Offending a Holy God, our most merciful Father and Redeemer.

2dly. Let us then consider the Sensitive Part of Sorrow, which we properly call the Passion of Sorrow; that Grief, and Pain, and Anguish of Mind, which arises from a Sense of Guilt and Sin. And there is great Reason to consider this Matter, to prevent Mistakes on all Hands. For some Men, if they do but condemn what they have done, as the worst Men in the World must do, who know the Difference between Good and Evil; think they are very true Penitents, tho' their Sins cost them not a single Sigh or Tear. Others flatter themselves, that they are true Penitents, because they feel a bitter Remorse for their Sins, as often as they commit them; though they are never the better Men for it, but return to their Sins again the first Opportunity, with a fresh Appetite: And others, who are heartily sorry for their Sins, and show all other Signs of a true Repentance, yet fear they are not sincere Penitents, because they do not labour under such bit-

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 67

ter Agonies of Mind, as they see some other Penitents do.

1st. Then I observe, That some degree of this Passionate Trouble of Mind is essential to Repentance. This we learn from all the Examples of Penitents recorded in Scripture. Thus the Prophet *David* complains, *Psal.* xxxviii. 3, 4. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin: For mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* *Psal.* li. 8, 9. *Make me to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.* Ver. 12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.* And the Sorrows of Repentance are described by a broken and a contrite heart, which God will not despise. *Job* abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. And *Peter*, when he had denied his Master, went out and wept bitterly.

Indeed it is impossible in the Nature of the Thing that it should be otherwise. Whatever it is that we dislike and condemn, the Thoughts of it are very uneasy, and painful too: And can any Man heartily retract his Sins, and condemn himself in Matters of so high a Nature, without any Trouble or Remorse of Mind? Sin is naturally painful to

68 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

the Mind, when Men do not truly repent; and can then Men truly repent of their Sins without Pain and Trouble? The bitter Pangs of Repentance are necessary to cure our Love to Sin, and to preserve us from future Temptations: Especially when we have contracted very powerful Habits, till we smart severely for our Sins, we shall easily be conquered by their Flatteries, and be persuaded to venture again. Men who can satisfy themselves with a slight Repentance, who confess their Sins, and ask God's Pardon as a thing of course, will have very frequent occasions to ask Pardon; they find so little trouble in Repentance, that they make new work for Repentance every day; and therefore it is necessary that the Pangs and Agonies of Repentance should bear some proportion to the Greatness of our Guilt, and the Difficulty of a Cure. The Degrees of this Godly Sorrow may be very different in different Penitents, but every Penitent must feel the Sorrows of Repentance.

But yet *2dly*, The mere Pain and Grief of Mind for our Sins, how sharp soever the Agonies of it may be, is not true Repentance: There is a never-dying Worm in Hell, but no Godly Sorrow there.

Sin is naturally painful to the Mind whenever we seriously reflect on it; but yet many Sinners feel this Pain, these Rebukes and Lashes of Conscience every day without repenting.

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 69

pening. It is not the bare Trouble and Anguish of Mind, but the Reasons of it, which I have now particularly explained to you, which make it a true Godly Sorrow. To be sorry for our Sins for such Reasons as will cure our Love to Sin, and work *repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of*, that alone is a true Godly Sorrow; and therefore we need not dispute this Matter further. How sorrowful soever Men are, or pretend to be, who continue in their Sins, and repeat them every day, though they confess and bewail them every night, they are no Penitents, nor is their Sorrow of any other account with God, than the Horrors and Agonies of the Damned; for that will be the End and Conclusion of such Sorrows as do not put an end to Sin, as are not the Pangs of the New Birth. For then,

3dly. We must not judge of the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance, merely by the Degrees of this passionate Sorrow: All true Penitents are not equally grieved with the Pain and the Sense of their Sins; for there are many things which will make a great Difference in this Matter.

As 1st, The different Temper of Men's Minds; which may differ as much as the Strength and Constitutions of their Bodies do. Some Men have a natural Softness and Tenderness of Spirit, and their Passions are easily moved and fired: They receive every Impression,

68 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

the Mind, when Men do not truly repent; and can then Men truly repent of their Sins without Pain and Trouble? The bitter Pangs of Repentance are necessary to cure our Love to Sin, and to preserve us from future Temptations: Especially when we have contracted very powerful Habits, till we smart severely for our Sins, we shall easily be conquered by their Flatteries, and be persuaded to venture again. Men who can satisfy themselves with a slight Repentance, who confess their Sins, and ask God's Pardon as a thing of course, will have very frequent occasions to ask Pardon; they find so little trouble in Repentance, that they make new work for Repentance every day; and therefore it is necessary that the Pangs and Agonies of Repentance should bear some proportion to the Greatness of our Guilt, and the Difficulty of a Cure. The Degrees of this Godly Sorrow may be very different in different Penitents, but every Penitent must feel the Sorrows of Repentance.

But yet *2dly*, The mere Pain and Grief of Mind for our Sins, how sharp soever the Agonies of it may be, is not true Repentance: There is a never-dying Worm in Hell, but no Godly Sorrow there.

Sin is naturally painful to the Mind whenever we seriously reflect on it; but yet many Sinners feel this Pain, these Rebukes and Lashes of Conscience every day without repenting.

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 69

penting. It is not the bare Trouble and Anguish of Mind, but the Reasons of it, which I have now particularly explained to you, which make it a true Godly Sorrow. To be sorry for our Sins for such Reasons as will cure our Love to Sin, and work *repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of*, that alone is a true Godly Sorrow; and therefore we need not dispute this Matter further. How sorrowful soever Men are, or pretend to be, who continue in their Sins, and repeat them every day, though they confess and bewail them every night, they are no Penitents, nor is their Sorrow of any other account with God, than the Horrors and Agonies of the Damned; for that will be the End and Conclusion of such Sorrows as do not put an end to Sin, as are not the Pangs of the New Birth. For then,

3dly. We must not judge of the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance, merely by the Degrees of this passionate Sorrow: All true Penitents are not equally grieved with the Pain and the Sense of their Sins; for there are many things which will make a great Difference in this Matter.

As 1st, The different Temper of Men's Minds; which may differ as much as the Strength and Constitutions of their Bodies do. Some Men have a natural Softness and Tenderness of Spirit, and their Passions are easily moved and fired: They receive every Impression,

70 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

and answer it, as the Wax does the Seal. Others have naturally a Hardiness of Mind, which knows not what weak and tender Passions mean: That which will break other Men's Spirits, cannot touch them; and tho' they are not wholly incapable of Fear and Sorrow, yet they are not easily moved, nor ever to any great Excess. Now suppose two such Men as these to have been equal Sinners, and now to be equally penitent; yet you can never suppose, that they should ever be equally sensible of the Passion of Sorrow. Natural Temper will make a Difference even in Religious Passions; and though such Men may have the same pious Sense of Things, yet the same Thoughts in such different Tempers, will not excite an equal Passion; and therefore this is a very uncertain Way of judging. Every sincere Penitent, who is duly affected with a Sense of his Sins, will be very sorry for them; but he will feel the sensible passionate Pain and Grief of this Godly Sorrow, more or less, as he does of all other Sorrow. And if our Sorrow for our Sins bears proportion to our Natural Sense of Sorrow in other Cases, tho' the Passion be not so great and vehement as what some other Penitents feel, yet it is as true and sincere as their's.

2dly. The Degrees of this passionate Sorrow must necessarily differ, according to the Nature, and Quality, and Number of Men's Sins.

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 71

Sins. Some Sins are so frightful, that Human Nature startles at them. Murder, Adultery, the Oppression of the Poor, the Widow, and the Fatherless, are enough to sink a Penitent, whose Eyes are open to see his Guilt, into the very Depth of Horror and Confusion. Especially when Men have lived long in such Sins as these, and have frequently committed them; for an ordinary Sorrow is not proportioned to such a Guilt. But a Man who has been religiously educated from his Youth, and has never been guilty of such Crying Sins, nor lived in any habitual Course of Wickedness; must not suspect the Truth of his Repentance, because he does not feel those Agonies and Horrors of Mind which such Sinners do and ought to feel.

3dly. We must not expect that the Remembrance of our former Sins, that we have long since committed, and long since repented of, should affect us with such a sensible Pain and Trouble, as they did when the Wound was fresh, and we laboured under a present Guilt. We must never remember our old Sins, without an Abhorrence of them, and some Trouble for them: But yet all such Passions decay by Time; and indeed if we have heartily repented of those Sins, we need not remember them with all the Trouble and Sorrow of Repentance. That Work is over, and we have reason to thank God for it, and to review our past Danger with such a

72 *Confession and Sorrow for Sin.*

mixt Fear and Pleasure, as a Mariner does, who has escaped a Shipwreck, and is got safe to the Shore.

4^{thly}. This passionate Sorrow for Sin, is many times heightened by some external Evils and Calamities; which are either the Natural Effects, or the Punishment of our Sins. God sometimes awakens Men into a Sense of their Sins, by suffering them to undo themselves, or by inflicting some severe Temporal Evils on them, which gives them a sharper Sorrow for their Sins than the mere Sense of Guilt ordinarily does. Men who repent of their Sins upon wise, and cool, and Religious Considerations, seldom feel those Furies and Outrages of Passion, which those Sinners do who are stormed by external Calamities and Judgments. But this is not all Sorrow for Sin, but a Mixture of temporal Sorrow.

5^{thly}. A Sense of present Danger extremely heightens and increases Men's Sorrow. When Sinners apprehend that they are just going into another World, to be judged for their Sins, which they have never yet repented of, this puts them into a terrible Consternation and Horror of Mind; and though their Repentance is seldom true, yet their Sorrows are very great. It is impossible to think of any Sign or Expression of Sorrow which will be wanting in these Men at such a time, which deceives By-standers into an Opinion
that

Confession and Sorrow for Sin. 73

that they are very true Penitents: that they Repent more heartily of their Sins than ever they themselves did. And no doubt, but that they do at such a time as this feel greater Horrors of Mind than most true Penitents ever did. But whether their Repentance be true or false, which God will judge, God forbid that such Horrors as these, should be made the Standard of true Repentance, which we have great Reason to fear is no true Repentance itself.

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

The Purification of our Lives by
God's Word.

P S A L M cxix. 9.

*Wherewith shall a young man cleanse
his way; by taking heed thereto ac-
cording to thy word?*

THIS *Pfalm*, which is one of the long-
est and most artificially composed of
any in the whole Book, is spent in the Com-
mendation of the Word, the Laws, the
Statutes of God, and recommendeth them
to our Study and Practice. In my Text they
are prescribed the Young Man, as the most
certain Means to preserve his Virtue and In-
nocence: *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse
his way; by taking heed thereto according to
thy word?*

In which Words there is something im-
plied, and something expressed. As

1st. It is implied, Of what great Concern-
ment it is to lay the Foundations of Piety and
Virtue in Youth.

2^{dly}.

2dly. It is implied, That this is very difficult to preserve Young Men from the Pollutions of the World. The very Question how this may be done, supposes that it is not very easy to do.

3dly. It is expressed by what Means Young Men may cleanse their Ways, and preserve themselves innocent and pure; *by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

I shall speak but briefly to the Two first of these, and insist more largely upon the Third.

1st. Of what Moment and Consequence it is, to lay the Foundations of Piety and Virtue in Youth. This the *Psalmist* appears greatly concerned for, that Young Men should preserve their Innocence, and not corrupt and defile themselves with worldly Lusts. There needs not much to be said of this, if we will allow it to be every Man's Interest to be a good Man, to please God, and to save his Soul.

For, 1. The Seeds and Principles of Virtue, which are sown and take root in Youth, will grow up and increase with Age: If once our tender Minds are througly prepossessed with an Awe and Reverence of God, and Regard to his Laws, this will grow up into Nature, and fit us to live in this World, and to encounter all the Temptations of it. It is of mighty Consequence which way our early Prejudices and Inclinations lye, how

we

we stand affected toward Virtue or Vice; for this will be a strong Bias, and have a powerful Influence on us through the whole course of our Lives. As corrupt as Human Nature is, the first Tendencies and Motions of Nature are on Virtue's side; as is evident from those natural Notions of Good and Evil; a natural Belief of, and Reverence for God; a natural Sense of Shame and Modesty; the natural Remorse of Conscience when we do Ill; and the natural Ease, and Pleasure, and Satisfaction of Mind, in doing Well; which no Man is born without, tho' some Men make a hard shift to stifle and suppress them, that they may live without them. But were these natural Principles and Inclinations, which of themselves are weak, Encouraged and Cultivated by an early Sense and Practice of Piety and Virtue, Religion would be engrafted into Nature, and Improve and Reform it, and grow up with it as Firm and Immoveable as Nature is.

It is indeed too often seen, that those who have had a very Virtuous and Religious Education, when they find themselves at Liberty, run into all Excess of Riot, and cast off all Thought of God and Regard for his Laws: But this very often is the Fault of their Education, when imprudent and too severe Restraints give them such a Prejudice to Religion, that they are glad to find themselves at Liberty from the Discipline of it: But then
such

such Men appeared good, but were not so; their Vicious Inclinations were under Restraint and Government, but they had no true Sense of God, nor Love for Virtue. But Young Men who are truly good, are in the most likely way to live and die Good Men; for the Temptations of the World cannot make such easy Approaches to them: And the Holy Spirit of God, which is greater than the Spirit that is in the World, takes an early Possession of them. That tho' some Men with great Labour and Industry may correct the Faults of their Education, and subdue their youthful Lusts, yet the most certain and the most easy way to prove good Men, is to be good betimes. As will appear if we consider,

2dly. That there is very little Hope of those who make it their first Care as soon as they get into the World, to get rid of all the Ties and Restraints of Religion, and give themselves up to the Government of their unruly Lusts and Passions. For what should call those Men back when grown old in Sin, who begun their Lives with a Mock at Sin, and laughing God and Religion out of the World? And as for those who are not so wicked as this comes to, who do not begin with Atheism and a Contempt of Religion, as very few Men can, but only venture to indulge their Lusts, and to taste the sinful Pleasures of this Life; tho' at first they sin with
Fear

Fear and Trembling, yet what Hope is there when all the Arguments of Religion could not hinder these fearful and timorous Beginnings, they should ever put a stop to them, when they will so quickly sin away all Sense of Fear and Shame? Such Men are so seldom reclaimed, that bad Men think it a Distraction when they prove Converts, and good Men think it a Miracle of God's Grace and Mercy. This is sufficient to my present purpose, to shew you of what great Concernment it is, to begin our Lives with the Fear and Reverence of God ; which is the only likely, to be sure the only safe and secure way, to prove good Men, and to save our Souls.

II. These Words imply also, the great Difficulty of preserving Young Men Pure and Innocent ; that they are in great Dangers of defiling themselves with youthful Lusts ; which therefore *St. Paul* warns *Timothy* himself against. Besides the sad Experience we have of this, in an Age wherein so many Young Men are so miserably Corrupted in their Principles and Morals, whoever considers the State of Youth, will need no other Proof of this: Their Passions are generally strong and boisterous, their Reason not well formed nor steady, they have a quick Relish of all sensual Pleasures, and they have a great Curiosity to try every thing, and to find out the uttermost Happiness and Pleasure this World can afford: They are easily seduced
by

by bad Company, and by bad Examples, especially by the greatest Numbers, and Men of the greatest Note and Character; in short, they are fitted for all the Pleasures of this Life, and exposed to all the Temptations of it; and yet if left to their own Government and Conduct, have neither Reason nor Experience enough, nor such confirmed Habits of Virtue, as to defend them from the Cheats and Flatteries of a tempting World. This must be allowed to be a dangerous State; and therefore the *Psalmist* might well enquire what Remedy there is for it: *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?* Which brings me.

III. To the main Design and Scope of my Text, to shew you, How Young Men may Cleanse their Ways; how they may preserve themselves Innocent and Pure from all the Corruptions and Defilements of the World and the Flesh; and that is, By taking Heed to their Ways, by governing their Lives and Actions by the Word and Laws of God. This may be thought no great Mystery either with respect to Young or Old Men; that the only means to Cleanse our Ways is to live by God's Laws, to do whatever God Commands, and to avoid whatever he Forbids. But this don't seem to have the nature of a Direction, how Young Men may preserve their Innocence and Virtue. They will do this indeed if they have a regard to the Word of God, and make that the only Rule of their Lives;

Lives; but how will this Conquer all the Temptations of the World and the Flesh, and antidote Youth, as thoughtless and giddy as it is, against their Charms? And this is what I intend, as plainly as I can, to represent to you.

1st, Then, I shall consider the Laws of God as the Rule of our Actions; and there is no other that we can chuse to live by, which will perfectly Cleanse our Ways, but the Word of God. Tho' Mankind had generally truer Notions of Moral Duties, and the Differences between Moral Good and Evil, than they had of the speculative Notions in Religion, such as related to the Nature and the Worship of their Gods; yet there were few Nations wherein some great Vices were not publickly allowed, and either thought Virtues, or at least no Vices. And their several Sects of Philosophers differed as much amongst themselves about the Rules of Virtue, as about their more abstruse Speculations; and there is not among them all any one entire and perfect Rule of Life to be found, which we could securely rely on: Most of them justify or recommend some Vice or other; none of them give us a perfect System of Virtues: But *the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure,*

VOL. II. G enlightening

enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether, Ps. xix. 7, 8, 9. So that as far as a Rule goes, we cannot have a more perfect Rule than the Word of God. Here we find the difference between Good and Evil: We may easily know our Duty if we will take care to practise it: We can no longer plead Ignorance nor Uncertainty for our Excuse; *For he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Now this is a mighty Advantage both to Young and Old, especially to Young Men, who have no great Experience of the World, to have a plain Rule of Life; this secures them from the Infection of bad Examples, how many or how great soever they may be; for what Authority has an Example, or Ten thousand Examples, against a Rule which both they and we are bound to live by, and shall certainly be judged by? Examples may have some Authority where there is no Rule, but where there is, and an infallible Rule too, we must live by our Rule, and not imitate but condemn such Examples as contradict our Rule. So that would Young Men thus take heed to their Ways according to the Word of God, it would deliver them from one of the greatest Temptations in the World; for
there

there is nothing more contributes to the Wick-
edness of Mankind, nothing is more especial-
ly apt to mislead Young Men, than the Power
of Example.

2dly, We must not only consider the Word
of God as the most perfect Rule of Life, but
that which carries the most sacred and com-
manding Authority with it, considered as a
Rule it will direct us in the Right Way, which
no other Rule universally does. But Man-
kind will not be directed and governed with-
out Authority; and no Authority can equal-
ly command all Mankind, but the Autho-
rity of God; and such an Authority is to be
found no where but in the Word of God;
which makes this the most effectual means
for Young and Old to Cleanse their Ways.
Thus to explain this more particularly.

1st, There is no need to prove, That
Mankind will not be governed without Au-
thority; the Experience of the whole World
proves it. Men will live just as they please,
if there be no superior Power over them;
and when Inclination, and Passion, and Inter-
est, are governing Principles, we daily see
what Confusion and Disorder it brings into
Human Life. How little do the wisest Rea-
sons, and the most prudent Counsels, and
the most passionate Exhortations, signify with-
out Authority? Try the Experiment where
you please, in Kingdoms, in Armies, in pri-
vate Families, it is Authority, not mere un-

armed Reason, that Governs: And an Authority which can punish Disobedience will command Submission. But whatever Authority mere Reason has over Virtuous and Ingenuous Minds, which at best is very precarious, and no more than every Man will allow it, its Authority is despised by Lust and Passion; and therefore can never reform the World, as we know the Precepts of Philosophy never could.

2dly, But then as Mankind will not be governed without Authority, so there is no Authority can govern and reform the World, but only the Authority of God. All Men who believe a God, allow his Right to Govern, and acknowledge his Power to Govern: and therefore he alone can give Laws to all the World, who is the Maker and Sovereign Lord and Judge of all the World. When we know what his Will is, that is our Law, the Law whereby we shall be judged. Human Authority is subject to great Defects, both in making and executing Laws, which makes it unable to reform the World. Men may dispute the Justice, Reasonableness, and Equity of Human Laws, and absolve themselves from Obedience, when they can safely do it: But there is no disputing against the Will and Law of God; his Authority commands our Obedience without asking a Reason; the Law of God is always the highest Reason, whether we discover the Reasons of
it

it or not ; but it is the Authority of the Law-giver, not the mere Reason of the Law, which we may not always know or judge rightly of, which must Govern our Lives. The great Reasonableness and Equity of Laws justifies the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in giving us such Laws to encourage our Obedience, and makes our Disobedience the more inexcusable ; but we must have a care of Expounding or Disputing away any Divine Laws, to make them, as some Men do, as they say, more reasonable and better fitted to the Necessities and Conveniences of Human Life. Nothing but an Authority superior to Human Reason can reform the World ; for if Men may be allowed to Expound the plain Laws of God as well as the Articles of Faith, by what they call Human Reason, they will quickly make a new Body of Laws as well as a new Creed.

Thus Human Authority can reach no further than to govern our external Conversation ; it can take no Cognizance of our Thoughts and Passions, which are the great Springs of Action ; and therefore it can never make good Men ; it cannot cleanse and purify our Hearts, but only wash the Outside of the Cup or Platter, when all may be Rottenness and Impurity within. None can give Laws to Hearts but only God, who alone searcheth the Hearts and trieth the Reins of the Sons of Men ; and therefore his Authority alone

can Cleanse our Ways, which will never be Cleanfed while our Hearts, our Thoughts, and Confcienccs are Defiled ; and no Authority can reach them but only the Authority of God.

Thus how many Defects and Miscarriages is Human Authority fubject to, in the Execution of their Laws, which in fuch Cafes make the Authority of little Ufe ; it can punifh only fuch Offences as are known, and where the Criminal is known: And how much Wickednefs and Villainy is there daily Concealed ? How little does Authority fignify to cautious Sinners, who keep out of the reach of Human Juftice ? And how readily do Men venture upon any Wickednefs which they can Conceal, and how many daily venture upon the mere Hopes that they fhall be Concealed ? Power, and Favour, and Intereft fecure fome Sinners ; and the neglect or perverting of Juftice, others : That it is vifible, that thofe Men who look no further than Human Authority, have no regard to the Laws of Virtue, but ftudy only how to efcape Human Juftice, which they know there are fo many ways to efcape, that they may venture ftill to be very wicked. But the Authority of God leaves no fuch Hope for Sinners ; they can neither hide themfelves from Him, nor bribe his Juftice, nor refift his Power ; and this alone is fuch an Authority as can reform the World.

Now

Now it is certain, that no Laws have so express a Divine Authority, as the Laws of God. The Laws of Nature are thought very Sacred Things, and to have the Authority of the Author of Nature, which is no less than a Divine Authority; and I would by no means derogate from the Authority and Laws of Nature: But how many Disputes are there about these Laws; and how difficult is it to state the true Notion of the Law of Nature? If you appeal to the general Consent of all Nations for the Laws of Nature, which is the best and most reasonable Appeal we can make, and which *Tully* thought a very good Evidence; you are presently told, There are many Things wherein several Nations disagree: That some Laws, which have the general Reputation of the Laws of Nature in some Nations, are rejected, or utterly unknown by others, who have received some Customs and Usages, which we think utterly abhorrent from Nature, as Natural Laws. If you say, that not mere popular Opinions, but Natural Reason must judge of the Laws of Nature; they tell you how uncertain a Judge this is: That different Men reason very differently, and very absurdly too; as is evident in many Sects of Philosophers, who justify such Vices, as the rest of the World think against the Laws of Nature. However, it is certain, that whatever is reasonable, is not therefore presently a Law of

Nature, nor any Law at all. And if mere Reason cannot make a Law, much less is every thing that appears reasonable a Law of Nature, when it cannot make it self a Law in the meanest Corporation.

But it is certain, that the Word of God has a Divine Authority, and therefore ought to have the same Regard paid it, as if we heard God speaking to us, and giving us those Laws and Counsels which we find written in it. And can there be a more effectual Means to cleanse our Ways, than frequently to read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures? which in all this Discourse I have taken for granted to be the Word of God, and I hope you all believe it to be so. Here is not mere Reason, but Authority; this is the Rule you must be judged by, and that carries a venerable Authority with it, the Authority of eternal Life and eternal Death. And would any Man then of common Sense, who has a mind to save his Soul, lay aside the Holy Scriptures, which have such a commanding Authority, to take *Tully*, or *Seneca*, or *Epietetus*, or any other Philosopher, into his hands; which have no other Authority but what Reason gives them; which goes but a little way, and which every Man will judge of for himself? I am sure, Young Men especially, who, whatever they think of themselves, want Experience, and see but a little way into the Reasons of Things, and have boisterous and
heady

heady Passions; want Authority to govern them; and the greatest Authority in the World, is the Word and Law of God. This will always direct them right, and if any thing can govern them, this will: And therefore this is the most proper Means for Young Men to cleanse their Ways, to *take heed there- to according to God's word.*

I must observe here by the way, how vain that Pretence is, against the Necessity of Revelation; That Natural Reason is sufficient to direct us in the Rules of good Living. Which is very false: For you cannot make up a System of Christian Graces and Virtues, out of any, or all the Philosophers. But supposing this were true, where is the Authority of it? How could this govern and reform Mankind? Mere Human Reason, and Human Authority, cannot do it. Most Men think themselves Masters of as much Reason as their Neighbours; and, if they have no Instructors but Men, will judge for themselves, and take what they like, and leave the rest: That were there no other Reason or Necessity for Divine Revelation, than to give new Power and Authority to enforce these Laws, it seems very necessary that God should be our Law-giver, to reinforce these Laws by his own Authority. There are some other Things very fitting to be taken notice of upon this Argument, which

I shall

Nature, nor any Law at all. And if mere Reason cannot make a Law, much less is every thing that appears reasonable a Law of Nature, when it cannot make it self a Law in the meanest Corporation.

But it is certain, that the Word of God has a Divine Authority, and therefore ought to have the same Regard paid it, as if we heard God speaking to us, and giving us those Laws and Counsels which we find written in it. And can there be a more effectual Means to cleanse our Ways, than frequently to read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures? which in all this Discourse I have taken for granted to be the Word of God, and I hope you all believe it to be so. Here is not mere Reason, but Authority; this is the Rule you must be judged by, and that carries a venerable Authority with it, the Authority of eternal Life and eternal Death. And would any Man then of common Sense, who has a mind to save his Soul, lay aside the Holy Scriptures, which have such a commanding Authority, to take *Tully*, or *Seneca*, or *Epicletus*, or any other Philosopher, into his hands; which have no other Authority but what Reason gives them; which goes but a little way, and which every Man will judge of for himself? I am sure, Young Men especially, who, whatever they think of themselves, want Experience, and see but a little way into the Reasons of Things, and have boisterous and
heady

heady Passions; want Authority to govern them; and the greatest Authority in the World, is the Word and Law of God. This will always direct them right, and if any thing can govern them, this will: And therefore this is the most proper Means for Young Men to cleanse their Ways, to *take heed thereto according to God's word.*

I must observe here by the way, how vain that Pretence is, against the Necessity of Revelation; That Natural Reason is sufficient to direct us in the Rules of good Living. Which is very false: For you cannot make up a System of Christian Graces and Virtues, out of any, or all the Philosophers. But supposing this were true, where is the Authority of it? How could this govern and reform Mankind? Mere Human Reason, and Human Authority, cannot do it. Most Men think themselves Masters of as much Reason as their Neighbours; and, if they have no Instructors but Men, will judge for themselves, and take what they like, and leave the rest: That were there no other Reason or Necessity for Divine Revelation, than to give new Power and Authority to enforce these Laws, it seems very necessary that God should be our Law-giver, to reinforce these Laws by his own Authority. There are some other Things very fitting to be taken notice of upon this Argument, which

I shall

I shall now only give you some brief Intimations of. As

3dly, That the Word of God is the most effectual Means to cleanse our Ways, as it offers the most powerful Motives and Arguments to Obedience, even no less than the eternal Rewards and Punishments of the next Life. These, I confess, are not so plain and express in the Law of *Moses*, tho' there was so much reason to believe them, from that Covenant which God made with *Abraham*, and from the Law itself, that good Men did generally believe them; and it was never questioned, that we know of, till the Sect of the *Saducees*, which was but of a late Date. But this is in express Words declared in the Gospel of our Saviour, which *both brought life and immortality to light*; what none of the Heathen Philosophers could give us any Assurance of. And yet, what are all other Arguments to persuade Men to be good, in comparison with this? To say that it is reasonable to live virtuously, will not persuade Men who will not live by Reason; as few Men will do merely for Reason's sake. To tell them that Virtue is a Reward to itself, is such a Speculation as some Men laugh at, and which no Man feels the Power of: But Eternal Life and Death are sensible Arguments, and must affect all Men who are not Infidels. And the Word of God alone can give us Security of this, which is the only
I powerful

powerful Argument to reform our Lives. The Practice of Piety and Virtue may entitle us to the Care of Providence in this World, deliver us from those Temporal Evils which many Vices betray us to, and be a natural or moral Instrument of some Temporal Good to us: But all this alone will no more make us Good Men, than the Reasonings of Philosophers: These are additional Encouragements to Good Men, who live by the Faith of unseen Things; but neither are, nor ought ever to be urged as the great Motives of our Obedience; for they will never make a Good Man, tho' they will encourage and support a Man who is already good. Thus the Word of God furnishes us with the greatest Patterns and Examples of all Virtue and Goodness; especially the Example of our Lord, *who did no evil, neither was any guile found in his mouth*; but spent his whole Time in doing good. And if there be any Power in Examples, all the World besides cannot furnish us with such Examples; especially as the Example of our Lord and Saviour; which, as it was the most perfect Pattern, so is it what we are the most concerned to imitate. Bad Examples do a great deal of Mischief in the World; especially the Examples of Great Men, and of a great Multitude. But here we have numerous Examples, and a greater and a more commanding Example than they all; even the Example

ple of the Son of God, our Redeemer, and our Saviour, and our Judge too. To this I may add, that in the Word of God we have the visible Examples of the great Rewards of Good Men, and the Punishment of the Wicked. We may observe this in Human Story, in many Instances; the Prosperity of Virtuous Men, and the Miseries and Calamities of the Wicked: But there is this Difference between them; that in Human Story we only know what Events happen to Good or Bad Men; which make no Impression upon us, while we know not the Reason why Good Men were prosperous, and the Evil punished; which is easily attributed to Chance and Fortune, when there are so many contrary Instances of the Sufferings of Good Men, and the Prosperity of the Wicked. But in the Word of God we learn, that these Good Men were not prosperous, nor the Wicked afflicted, by Chance; but as a Reward of their Virtues, or a Punishment of their Vices, and an Earnest of the Rewards and Punishments of the next Life. But the Resurrection of our Saviour, and his Advancement from the Cross to the Right Hand of God, is such a visible Demonstration of the Rewards of Obedience, and gives us such a Security of a Blessed Resurrection, as the World never had before, and than which it is impossible she should ever have a greater.

The

The Sum, in short, is this; To persuade you all, and particularly Young Men, frequently to read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, the Sacred Word of God; which is the most perfect Rule of Life, and has the most commanding Authority; which furnishes us with the most perfect Examples of Virtue, and the most visible Rewards of it; and therefore is the most effectual Means we can take, to cleanse and purify our Hearts and Lives, and thereby partake of all those Blessed Promises contained in the Word of God, both in this Life, and that which is to come.

The first of these is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.
 The second is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.
 The third is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.

The fourth is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.
 The fifth is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.
 The sixth is the fact that the
 country is not only a fertile one, but
 it is also a country of great beauty.



S E R M O N VI.

Against Thoughtfulness for To-morrow.

MATTH. vi. 34.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.

THIS may be thought a very hard Saying in perilous Times, which gives us a terrible Prospect of very great Evils, with very little Hope of escaping. For how is it possible not to be thoughtful, unless we are perfectly stupid and senseless, when we see ourselves encompassed with Dangers, and it may be too late to take Care of To-morrow, when To-morrow comes? And I confess this would not only be a very hard, but a very unreasonable Saying, were our Saviour's Words expounded to such a Latitude, as to exclude all prudent Care and Foresight of future

future Events; which must very often betray us into those Miseries, which Wise Men, who foresee them, know how to escape. And yet we must own, that there is a degree of Care and Thoughtfulness, which is a direct Contradiction to all the Principles of Religion, and more afflicting and vexatious than most of those Evils which we so much fear; which is inconsistent with a Divine Providence, and a Submission to the Divine Will, and destroys all the Peace and Security, and sours all the present Enjoyments of Life.

Let us then *First* consider, What that Care and Thoughtfulness is, which our Saviour here forbids.

Secondly, His Reasons to dissuade us from it, *To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; and, Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* And

Thirdly, Let us consider the Cure of this.

1st. What that Care and Thoughtfulness is, which our Saviour forbids. Now it is certain that he forbids no such Care and Thoughtfulness as Religion itself, as well as common Prudence, makes our Duty: And therefore he does not forbid a prudent Care of future Events; to prevent the Beginnings of Mischief, and to beware of the ill Consequences of our Actions. For *Solomon* tells us, this is the Property of a Wise Man: *The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.*

himself. Nor does our Saviour forbid Diligence and Industry, to provide for Times to come, as far as they are within our Prospect. God has given so much Sagacity to the Ants, as to provide in the Summer for a Winter-Season. And *Solomon* sends the Sluggard to those Little Busy Creatures, to learn Industry and Providence from them. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.* Our Saviour forbids nothing that belongs to human Care and Industry: Whatever we can do by prudent Fore-sight and Diligence, to provide for ourselves, and to prevent any threatening Dangers, is our Duty as we are Men, whom God has endowed with Reason and Understanding to take Care of ourselves; and whatever we suffer by such Neglects, is not directly chargeable upon the Divine Providence, but upon ourselves. When our Saviour, *ver. 26.* dissuades us from this Thoughtfulness, by the Example of God's Care of inferior Creatures; *Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?* I say, the Meaning of this is not to encourage us to sit still, without doing any thing for ourselves, and to expect that God should feed us as he does the Fowls of the Air, without sowing, or reaping, or gathering into Barns; or that he should cloath us as he does the Lilies of the Field, without

toiling or spinning: But by these Examples our Saviour teaches us, that where our Care ends, or is of no use to us, God will take Care of us without our Care. The Fowls of the Air have a natural Sagacity to discover their Food, and to find where it may be had; but ploughing, and sowing, and reaping is none of their Care; and therefore God has taken Care of this for them, by the natural Productions of the Earth, or by the Labour and Industry of Man, whose proper Business this is. And thus we may be sure God will provide for us, who are nobler Creatures, and of greater Value and Esteem with him. Where our Art, and Industry, and Prudence ends, there our Care must end too; for all other Matters entirely belong to God's Care; and *he careth for us*. To-day is our Care, that is, what is present, or within a reasonable Prospect; we must do what our present Duty, and the present Exigency of Affairs requires a wise Man to do: For To-morrow is God's Care; that is, the Success of our Actions, of our Prudence and Industry. All future Events, and remote Contingencies, and unseen Accidents, which have such a great Stroke in all human Affairs, are entirely in God's Hands, and therefore are his Care too. We must be careful to do all that belongs to us to do, with as great Industry and Application as if the whole Success depended on it; but when we have done our
Duty,

Duty, we must not be thoughtful to know what God will do with us ; how he will succeed and prosper what we do ; whether all our Industry and Prudence shall provide Food and Raiment for us, or secure us from those Dangers which threaten us. This is the Thoughtfulness our Saviour forbids, which is full of Trouble and Anxiety, and all to no Purpose ; for these things do not belong to our Care, and all our Care cannot help us : *For which of you can by taking thought add one cubit to his stature ?* Whether our Stature shall be tall or short, is not in our Power to determine ; and the Success and Events of our Actions are as much out of our Power as adding to our Stature ; and therefore all our Thoughtfulness about them is as vain. This is the first Thing, What that Thoughtfulness is which our Saviour forbids ; taking Thought for To-morrow, a Thoughtfulness about future Events, which are out of our Power, and wholly in the Disposal of God : And therefore there we should disburden all our Cares ; as the *Psalmist* direct us, *Psal. lv. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord ;* that is, all such Cares as these, which are a very heavy Burden ; *and he shall sustain thee, Psal. xxxvii. 5. Commit thy ways unto the Lord ;* that is, all the Events and Successes of thy Actions ; *Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.*

100 *Against Thoughtfulness*

2dly, Let us consider the Force of our Saviour's Arguments to dissuade us from this Thoughtfulness. And I shall confine myself to those in my Text; which are Two.

I. *The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*

II. *Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.*

I. *The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself*; which being a Figurative Expression admits of a Latitude of Sense; as I shall shew you in some few Particulars.

1st, This may signify that God, in whose hands To-morrow, or all future Events are, will take care of all future Events.

2dly, That the properest time for us to take Care of To-morrow, or all future Events, is when To-morrow comes, when we see what To-morrow will bring forth. As for the first, there is no Reason to doubt it, if we believe a Providence, for all Times are in God's Hands, and though we are ignorant of what is to come, all Futurities are under his immediate Inspection and Care. And indeed if God take any Care of us, such things are more immediately under his Care which we ourselves can take no Care of; as it is impossible we should of such things as we know nothing of, or in such Cases as are beyond our Knowledge. This is the Argument St. Peter uses, to *cast all care upon God, because he careth for us*, 1 Pet. v. 7. This makes

makes God the Object of our Faith, and Hope, and Trust; and when To-morrow, which we cannot take Care of, is taken Care of by God, why should we be so careful and solicitous about it? Are we not safe in God's Hands? Do we distrust his Promises, or his Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power to help us? This is very impious and very provoking, and what we cannot possibly benefit ourselves by: All our Thoughtfulness can do us no good; it is a Contempt of God's Care of us, and tempts him justly to cast off the Care of us: Whereas there is nothing does more effectually engage the Providence of God on our side, than a firm Faith and Reliance on him. When we can say with the Prophet, *Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herb in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation,* Hab. iii, 17, 18,

2dly. *To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,* seems principally to relate to our taking Thought of To-morrow; and then it signifies, it is time enough for us to take Thought of To-morrow when To-morrow comes. For, 1st, We can take no Thought of To-morrow to any purpose, till we see what To-morrow will bring forth; for what Care can we take of what is absent

and unknown? To-morrow will bring such Wisdom and Counsel along with it as will be proper for what may happen To-morrow; When we see what the State of Things are, we shall then be able to judge what Course to take, whether there be any Remedy or no, or whether we must patiently submit; to whom we must apply ourselves for Relief, or how we may allay and mitigate the Evil, and make it more easy to us at present, or put a short end to it: This is such Thoughtfulness as is of great use to us, and becomes a wise Man and a Christian. But this is such Thoughtfulness as belongs to To-morrow, and is out of Season and of no Use till To-morrow comes. To be solicitous about things which we know nothing of, neither what Evils we shall suffer, nor by what Means they will come upon us, nor consequently how we may prevent them, or what Remedy there is for them, is all vain and groundless. It is like being afraid, as Men are in the dark, without seeing any thing to hurt them: It is to raise frightful Spectres in our own Imaginations, and then to start and tremble at them. The natural use of Fear is, not to pry into future Events, and to presage ill Things, and to disturb ourselves with such frightful Apparitions, but to make us Cautious and Prudent to avoid all foreseen Evils, and to keep out of the reach of them. And then it is much too soon to
disquiet

disquiet ourselves with the unknown Evils and Troubles of To-morrow. And therefore in this Sense, let To-morrow take Care of itself.

For 1st, This is the most effectual way to make our whole Life one perfect Scene of Trouble. As many Evils, and Miseries as there are in the World, for *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*, yet Thanks to the good Providence of God, we enjoy many happy and prosperous Days. Sometimes there is no Cloud to be seen, not the least Appearance of a Storm. And one would think that Men might enjoy themselves in profound Peace, when all is Calm and Serene about them. But these Thoughtful Men, when they see and feel nothing to trouble them, very often sink under their own Fears, and are much more miserable in Fearing, than they would be in Suffering what they fear. Now there is no possible way left ever for such Men to be happy; their own jealous and disturbed Imaginations will create Evils, and make them real. Men who are disquieted without any real Cause may fear always; and tho' Time may cure one Fear, it will soon start another. The Diseases within cannot be cured with Change of Fortune. Men who are afraid of every *May-be*, will never want many frightful *May-be's* to perpetuate their Trouble. What a terrible Objection against Providence would this be,

should we live in a constant Storm, and no sooner escape one Misery but fall into another? And yet thus unmercifully do these Men deal with themselves, who give way to such solicitous Fears, who are always prying into future Events and remote Possibilities, and as much afflict themselves with the unknown Evils of To-morrow, as if they were present.

2dly, Suppose our Fears of To-morrow are not so wholly vain and groundless; Are not the Apparitions of a Melancholy Fancy; But we have too much Reason to fear what is coming; That the Danger is within View, and we can see little Possibility of escaping; In this Case To-morrow is the Object of a prudent Care, but not of such solicitous Fears. We must do what we can to avoid the Storm and to break the Force of it, or to fortify our Minds with Christian Courage and Patience, and an humble Submission to the Divine Will to enable us to bear it; But there is no Reason for such Anxiety and Thoughtfulness, as if the Evils we fear were certain and unavoidable. Whatever bad Prognostics there are, let us stay till To-morrow, and see what these Fears will prove: What is not yet, may never be. How often have we seen our Fears happily disappointed, and a threatening Storm drive us faster into a secure Haven? God has infinite Ways of disappointing the Power, the Malice,

Malice, and Policy of Men. He can take them in their own Craftiness; and when they have dug a Pit they shall fall into it themselves; as the *Psalmist* sings, *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped*, Psalm cxxiv. ver. 7. And therefore whatever appearing Dangers there are, we have no Reason to despond, as Men without Hope, while we have a watchful Providence to take Care of us. When we see how oft we are delivered from our Fears, when we have had just Reason for Fears, and could reasonably expect nothing less than what we feared; why should we disquiet ourselves with the solicitous Cares of To-morrow, when, if we would have but a little Patience, To-morrow itself may answer all these Fears? To-morrow may open a new Scene, and shew us a more comfortable Face of Things, and deliver us from those Troubles which we need never have suffered, if we would have deferred them till To-morrow. I shall not give you any particular Instances of this Nature; if you look but a few Years backwards, you may find them. How easy and happy might we be; how many troublesome Thoughts and distracting Fears might we escape, if we would take our Saviour's Advice, *Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself?* As many Evils as we fear which never happened to us,
which

which it may be are more than the Evils which we actually suffer, so much Trouble might we escape by adjourning the Cares and Fears of To-morrow, till we see what To-morrow will produce.

3^{dly}, Suppose that To-morrow should bring along with it all those Evils which we fear, yet let To-morrow take Care of the Things of itself; for it is too soon to be thoughtful and solicitous, till we see what the Evils are; and it is impossible to judge truly of them at a distance, especially when we view them through such a magnifying Glass as a melancholy and timorous Fancy. Both good and evil Things commonly appear much greater at a Distance than really they are. The Good we hope for seldom answers our Expectations, and the Evil we suffer falls short of our Fears: And the Reason is very plain, because in Hope we see only the bright Side of things, all that is charming and inviting; and Fear, on the contrary, is all black and frightful. We know that the Good we hope for, is in itself a very great Good; and the Evil we fear, a very great Evil: That were there nothing but Good in the one, and were there nothing but Evil in the other, as great Hopes and Fears generally represent them, we could not hope or fear too much: But when Men come to enjoy what they hope for, or to suffer what they feared, they find such a strange Mixture of Good and Evil, as in a great
measure

measure disappoints both their Hopes and Fears: The Good they hoped for, and which they expected so much from, may be attended with so many troublesome Circumstances, as either quite spoil, or extremely lessen the Comfort of it; and the Evil they fear may have so many alleviating, and mitigating Circumstances, as to make it light and easy, at least not so formidable as they feared it would prove.

As to instance in the Case of the Evils we are afraid of: Supposing that *Joseph* had foreseen that his Brethren would sell him to the *Ishmaelites*, and they sell him for a Bond-slave into *Egypt*; that there he should be cast into Prison without any Hope of Release, would not this have appeared very black and frightful? And yet we know all this was so allayed by the Kindness of *Potiphar*, and the Keeper of the Prison, as made his Slavery and Imprisonment very easy, and ended in his Advancement to *Pharaoh's* Throne. If we will but reflect either upon our private Concernments, or the public State of Affairs, how often have we concluded ourselves utterly lost and undone, if such or such Things should happen to us, which when they have happened, have done us no great Hurt, or at worst, have proved very tolerable Evils? This I take to be a very wise Reason, why we should put off the Care and the Thoughts of To-morrow till
To-

To-morrow, till we see what those Evils are which To-morrow will bring with it; which our Experience tells us are much less than what we fear; which will save us abundance of needless Trouble, which this Sollicitude and Thoughtfulness creates. This is the first Argument against Thoughtfulness for the Morrow; for *the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*

Illy, The other Argument of our Saviour to dissuade from this Thoughtfulness, is this, *Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof:* That is, it is enough to bear what is present as it becomes Men and Christians, without calling in the additional Cares and Troubles of Times to come. Every day more or less brings it's own Troubles with it; enough to employ our Care, and exercise our Courage and Patience to bear them; especially if our present Sufferings are great, which is apt to make us more solicitous and thoughtful, it is very unmerciful to ourselves to increase the Weight and Number of them by To-morrow's Cares and Fears, which generally break Men's Spirits more than what they suffer: and then they sink under every Feather; and those who can bear nothing, are not fit to live in this World, or must be very miserable if they do: But besides that these solicitous Cares and Fears break Men's Courage and Resolution, they over-load them too: It is much more easy to bear our Sufferings

ings when they come single ; but when we unite all the Miseries of our Lives, what is present, and what is to come, what we feel, and what we fear, this is a great deal too much to bear at once. Should all the Evils and the Sufferings which will befall us thro' our whole Lives, come upon us at once, like the Case of *Job*, who lost his Children, and his Servants, and Sheep and Oxen, and was stripped naked of all his great Possessions, and all the Comforts of Life in a Day ; and, to complete all, was smote with sore Boils from the Soles of his Feet to the Crown of his Head ; should we not think that God dealt very hardly with us ? Would not this make our Condition much more intolerable, than if the same Sufferings had come single, one at one time, and one at another ? And yet this Course we take to augment and aggravate our Sufferings, when to our present Sufferings we add the Fear and Sollicitude of Times to come. I have often thought it a great Blessing to Mankind, that God hath concealed future Events from us ; especially such Things as concern our own Condition and Fortune in the World : For could we at one View see all the Evils that should befall us throughout our whole Lives (as there is no Man so prosperous but meets with many grievous Things) such a Prospect as this must needs fill us with Fear, Discontent, and Dependancy, and spoil all the Pleasures and the

Comforts

Comforts of Life. But it is to no Purpose that God hath concealed these Things from us, if we will disquiet ourselves with the Fears and the Cares of To-morrow, without knowing what they will be; which distracts us with imaginary Evils, and inevitably makes us sink under our present Sufferings, which are enough for us to bear, and would be more easily borne, would we look no further than what is present; which one would think were very reasonable, when we can see no further.

The Sum of all is this; We are by Nature dependent Creatures, who live upon the Care and Provisions of Providence; we are sensible that we neither made ourselves, nor can preserve ourselves in Being one Moment: All the Provisions of Nature which are necessary to our Subsistence in this World, are out of our Power. Human Art may contribute something to the Fruitfulness of the Earth, but we cannot command Seed for the Sower, nor can we command the former nor the latter Rain; and we see daily that God provides for those Creatures who have no Understanding to provide for themselves: And this is a good Reason for us Men, who are of much more Value than any earthly Creatures, as being made after the Divine Image, to depend securely on the Protection of God; especially as to all such Matters as are not our proper Care, as fall not
within

within our Power and Foresight; as it is certain future Events do not. And therefore as by Nature we depend wholly upon God, so Reason and Religion should teach us to make it our Choice, and not to trouble ourselves about To-morrow, with uncertain and unknown Events; but *let to-morrow take thought for itself, for sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* How reasonable this is I have now shewn you; and it is evident how much it would contribute to our Happiness; for, excepting some extraordinary Cases, I dare appeal to any Man, whether the greatest Troubles and Perplexities of his Life have not been an unreasonable, I may say, an irreligious Care of To-morrow? The Fear and Expectation of unseen and unknown Events, which either have never happened, or have not been so terrible as he feared; and in the mean time have made him much more miserable than any present Sufferings he felt.

And yet what Cure is there for this? How impossible is it not to be thoughtful and solicitous for To-morrow, especially when we see the Clouds gathering, and a Storm ready to break upon our Heads? Now should an Atheist, who neither believes a God nor a Providence, or an Infidel, who believes no Revelation, and consequently none of God's Promises, ask me this Question, I must freely tell them, I know no Help for them;

them; if they cannot conquer their Fears by an obstinate Resolution, they must fear on; for the Atheist has no God to take Care of him, and the Infidel has no Promise of his Protection; and all that I have said can signify nothing to such Men. For the Atheist, who is under the Government of Fate and Chance, can never be secure; and how useless and tormenting soever his Fears are, he must be either perfectly stupid, and live without Thought, or he must fear on: And the general Belief of a Providence without any Promise of Protection, is not a sufficient Security to conquer to these Fears.

Such Arguments as I have now urged, though very reasonable, are all founded in the Belief of a Divine Providence, and of God's Promise to take Care of us; for without some one to take Care of us, how vain, and useless, and troublesome soever our Thoughtfulness and Sollicitude may be, there is no help for it, but that we must be so careful and solicitous, or we must not think at all. But when we are assured that God takes a particular Care of us; which is the Foundation of all our Saviour's Reasoning in my Text; then the Unreasonableness of Care and Sollicitude, which can do us no Good, but creates a great deal of vain and fruitless Trouble to us, is a very good Argument to depend entirely and securely upon the Divine Protection, without disturbing our-

ourselves with such things as fall not within our Care, as future and unknown Events do not.

And therefore the only way to deliver ourselves from all these vain and fruitless Cares, is to possess our Mind with a firm Belief of the Divine Providence, and of his Promises to take Care of us ; and to improve this into a stedfast Trust in God, and Dependence on him, and Submission to him. And the most effectual way to do this, is by our hearty Prayers to God, making known all our Wants to him, and begging his Supply of them ; as the Apostle direct us, *To be careful for nothing, but in all things with prayers, and supplications, and thanksgiving, to make known our request to God.* This will not only deliver us from all these tormenting Cares and Fears, but will transport us with Divine Joys. *For the Peace of God which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds.*

And therefore the only way to deliver
ourselves from all these vain and foolish
things, is to turn to the true and
living God, and to his Son Jesus
Christ, who is the true and living
God, and who has given us his
only Son, that we might have
eternal life in him. And this is
the true and living God, who is
the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit, who are one God, and
who have created all things, and
who are the true and living God,
and who have given us his only
Son, that we might have eternal
life in him. And this is the true
and living God, who is the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who
are one God, and who have created
all things, and who are the true
and living God, and who have given
us his only Son, that we might have
eternal life in him.

S
—
I
—
f
U
w
fa
th
C
C
gi
w
w
T
th

S E R M O N VII.

Concerning Lukewarmness.

R E V. iii. 15, 16.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

TH E S E Words are Part of that Epistle which our Saviour commanded *John* to write to the Church of *Laodicea*: Unto the angel of the church of the *Laodiceans* write, *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*: That is, not the first Creature, but he who gave Beginning to the Creation. *That Word which was in the beginning, was with God, and was God; by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made, that was made.* The Words describe the degenerate State of that Church, and contain a very severe

I 2 Threatning

116 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

Threatening against them. They are not charged with any notorious Corruptions either in Faith or Manners; which makes it probable that they were Orthodox in the Faith, and free from gross and scandalous Vices. *Tbou sayst that I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,* ver. 17. For a formal Profession of Religion, joined with an external Civility of Life, is very apt to make Men confident and secure.

This seems to be the Case of these *Laodiceans*, that they gloried in a pure Faith and a pure Worship, and that they were not guilty of such scandalous Vices, as either terrified their own Consciences, or exposed them to the Scorn and Censure of the World; but in the mean time they were great Strangers to the Life and Power of Religion: They were not stark cold, for they retained a formal Profession of Religion, and the Practice of some Moral and Social Virtues; and yet were far enough from being hot; they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, which our Saviour tells them was a Temper as offensive and nauseous to him, as lukewarm Water is to the Stomach, which provokes to vomiting; and therefore the proper Punishment for them was, *I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

Now though we have too many among us who are cold, cold as Death, who have no Sense of, no Concernment for, Religion; or are hot on the wrong Side, express a flaming

Concerning Lukewarmness. 117

ing Zeal to banish both the Faith and the Practice of Christianity out of the World; yet Thanks be to God we have a great many Serious and Devout Christians, who have a true Zeal for God, for his Faith and Worship; and I pray God increase their Number, that it may secure the Being of a Church amongst us, that our Lord may not also spue us out of his Mouth. For it is too visible, that this *Laodicean* Temper mightily prevails, and is grown the most Popular Fashion in Religion; which makes it more seasonable than I could wish it were, to discourse on this Argument, to explain the Nature, and to convince you of the great Evil and Danger of this Lukewarmness.

Now *First*, As to the Nature of it; To be neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, signifies a great Indifference in Religion; when we neither renounce it, nor express any great Concern for it: And this relates both to Faith and Practice.

1st, To Faith; when Men profess the true Christian Faith, and are neither Infidels nor Hereticks, but yet have no hearty Zeal for it: It is very visible when this is the Case, and too visible that this is the Case of great Numbers amongst us. As for Instance:

Tho' Men believe every Orthodoxly themselves, it is certain they have no great Value nor Zeal for the Faith, when they are very indifferent and unconcerned what other Men

118 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

believe; they either think very meanly of the Faith, or have very little regard to the Glory of God, or the Salvation of Mens Souls. If there be no Difference between Faith, Infidelity and Heresy, as to the Salvation of Men's Souls, then tho' the Christian Faith may be true, as they profess to believe it is, yet at best it is a very useless and insignificant thing, which is worth little: For the true Worth of Faith is, that necessary Influence it has on our Salvation. We account those useless Speculations, how true soever they may be, which serve no good Ends and Purposes of Life: Those who please may entertain their Curiosity with them, and reckon them among their other Diversions, and that is their uttermost Value. And as the Knowledge which concerns this present Life is worth just as much as it will do good, so the Value of Faith, which wholly relates to the other World, must be estimated by its Usefulness and Necessity to our future Happiness: If we can be saved without it, we may live without it too: But if we must be saved by Faith, and none but the true Christian Faith can save us, methinks we should not only take care to believe a-right ourselves, but appear as much concerned for other Mens Faith, as we are for their Salvation. If we do not believe Faith to be an indifferent Thing, it ought not to be indifferent to us how Men believe, no more than it can be to
a good

Concerning Lukewarmness. 119

a good Christian, whether his Brother be saved or damned; whether a true or false Religion prevail in the World; whether the Name of God and of his Son *Jesus Christ* be honoured and glorified, or reproached and scorned.

But besides this, such lukewarm Believers, tho' they happen to believe a-right, which is more owing to their Education than their Choice, have no Zeal for increasing their Knowledge, or understanding the Reasons of their Faith; much less have they any Zeal of propagating and defending the Faith, when it is assaulted by Infidels and Hereticks. Nay, too many can hear all Revelation scorned as a Cheat and Imposture, and the most Sacred Mysteries of our Religion ridiculed, without declaring such a just Resentment and Abhorrence, as the Prophanation of our most Holy Religion requires.

It is enough barely to name these Things, which are too well known: And are not these a very odd sort of Believers? Are there any Men in the World besides, whatever their Faith be, that are so unconcerned about it? Infidels and Hereticks oppose the Christian Faith with great Zeal; and can Religion keep its Ground, unless we oppose Zeal to Zeal? It is no wonder that concealed Atheists should appear so indifferent about Religion, for they take Religion only for a Disguise, and have nothing more to do with it; and

120 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

that is a reasonable Account of their Lukewarmness and Indifference; for they believe all Religions to be alike, and that there is none of them worth any thing. But it is almost incredible, that those who do believe their Religion, should be so indifferent what Men believe, so careless to understand what they believe themselves, so unconcerned to maintain and propagate the true Christian Faith, and to maintain a just Reverence and Veneration for it.

What can such Men think of our Saviour's Appearance in Human Nature, if they do really believe it? Did the Eternal Son of God take Human Nature, and live and converse in this World as a Man, preach the Gospel, work Miracles, die upon the Cross, rise again from the Dead, and visibly ascend up into Heaven; to do nothing but what might as well have been left undone; what is not worth any great Pains to understand; what we may believe, or not believe, without any Danger; what is fit to be ridiculed, or not worth defending if it be? Is not this a greater Affront to the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and to the Love and Condescension of our Saviour, than to deny that there ever was such a Person as *Christ* in the World? Is not an Infidel, who ridicules the Christian Faith, much more innocent, than a Christian who can patiently hear it ridiculed? Were there no other Proof of what great Concernment the Christi-

an

an Faith is, we need no other, than that God sent his only and Eternal Son to preach the Gospel; and certainly so great a Person did not come upon a needless Errand. But when we consider what it is the Gospel teaches, no less than how to obtain Eternal Happiness, and how to avoid Eternal Miseries; to believe this, and to believe it with Lukewarmness and Indifference, Atheists and Infidels themselves must despise as the most stupid and contemptible Folly; for it is to be indifferent and unconcerned about the most concerning Matters in the World? which at best argues a very trifling Spirit, and besides the Affront to God and to our Saviour, it makes Faith itself useless to all the Purposes of Religion; for Men who are so indifferent about their Faith, will have no great Zeal in the Practice of Religion. I know this is very often excused and justified with the Pretence of Moderation, and Christian Charity, of a quiet and peaceable Temper, which will not damn Men, nor quarrel with their Neighbours for every Difference in Opinion: Nay, the Popular Cry of Liberty of Conscience itself, is pressed to serve this Cause. But how great Virtues soever these may be thought, it is certain Men very much mistake them, when Moderation shuts out all Zeal for God, and our most Holy Faith; when Charity for Men excludes all Concernment for their Souls; when Men are so tame and gentle, as not to
con-

122 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

contend, and *contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints*; and when Liberty of Conscience is turned into a Liberty to reject and laugh at all the Articles and Mysteries of the Christian Faith; and to profess and propagate, and that without any Moderation, the most damnable Heresies.

II. Let us consider Lukewarmness, as it relates to Practice. Now hot, and cold, and lukewarm, must signify the different Tempers of Mens Minds, and relate to our inward Sense and Passions. To be cold, is to have no Sense at all of God or Religion, no Stirrings or Motions of our Affections that way. To be hot, is to have a lively and vigorous Sense of God, a Heat and Fervor of Spirit in all Acts of Devotion, a restless and unwearied Zeal in doing good. Lukewarmness is between both these: Such a Man retains some Sense of God, and of Religion, and therefore is not stark cold. He observes the publick Acts of Worship, and possibly is not a perfect Stranger to Closet Devotions. He may abstain from gross Immoralities, and do many good Things; but he feels very little of his Religion, has none of those Passions which belong to a Spiritual Life, and feels none of the Pleasures of it. His Religion is like the Motion of a Machine, without an inward Principle of Nature and Life: He must do something to quiet his
4 Conscience;

Concerning Lukewarmness. 123

Conscience ; and he does it, not because he likes it, but because it gives him Ease.

It is true, our Passions are such uncertain and changeable things, that we must not always judge of ourselves by sensible Heats and Transports. With respect to the passionate Parts of Religion, no Man is always the same ; and Good Men differ from each other, according to their Natural Frame and Temper. Some Mens Passions are more easily fired, more disposed to Rapture and Extasy ; others have as true and quick a Sense, but a more calm and equal Motion ; and Art may sometimes counterfeit Nature, and a Disease may out-do it, as the Burning of a Fever does the Natural and Vital Heat : And therefore I shall not refer the Judgment of this Matter wholly to the sensible Motions of Passion ; for Good Men may sometimes in their Devotions find very little of it, and lukewarm Formalists may feel some accidental Heats and Transports. But there are more certain Indications of this which cannot deceive us.

As, *first*, a lukewarm Formalist makes as little Religion as may be serve the Turn ; and thus it must be, when Religion is a mere Task, and not a Principle of Life. The great Enquiry of such Men is, what strict Duty requires of them ; how much they are bound to do by express and positive Laws ? How often they must pray, and go to Church, and hear the Word of God read and preached,

124 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

ed, and receive the Holy Sacrament? And how seldom they may do all this without Sin? And because they do not find in Scripture any positive Determination of these Matters, they chuse for themselves, and make as little serve as will quiet their Consciences, (which are usually very reasonable) and avoid the Scandal and Censure of the World. They cry out loudly against those who impose difficult and unreasonable Tasks, and say very truly, that God never intended to make Religion our Burden: And, it seems, they know no way to make it easy, but to take a little of it. Now wherever this is found, it is a certain Demonstration of a lukewarm Formalist, who has no Natural Warmth or Heat, no Vital Sense of Religion. Nature never desires to be excused; Strength and Appetite are the only Measures it knows. Our Saviour has prescribed no certain Measure to our Devotions, but the different Degrees of a new and Spiritual Life will do this. Then Religion grows burthensome, when we extend the Exercise of our Devotion beyond the Life and Vigor of it. But a truly devout Mind, according to the Degrees and Strength of its Devotion, will as certainly call upon us for the Returns of Duty, as an empty Stomach calls for Meat: And therefore, when the exact Proportions of Duty must be prescribed, and the less the better, this is not Nature and Life, but a counterfeit Imitation,

Concerning Lukewarmness. 125

tation. Such Men have so much Sense left, as to know that they ought to serve God; but have no Principle of Spiritual Life and Sense to serve him with.

2dly. As near of kin to this, I observe, That these lukewarm Formalists are contented with the lowest Degree of Grace and Virtue; they have no Ambition to excel, nor do they envy those great Minds, who with infinite Labour and Difficulty make great Progresses in Virtue, and expect and hope for a proportionable Reward. The lowest Place in Heaven will content them, if they can but keep out of Hell: And I do not blame them for being contented with the meanest Place in Heaven, the Glory and Happiness of which is beyond all that we can conceive: But those who desire the lowest Place in Heaven, only that they might be the least of Saints upon Earth, and desire Heaven only to keep out of Hell, are never likely to have any Place there.

This is a certain Sign of Lukewarmness, when they have no Zeal, no Will to be good, any farther than of Necessity they must be so. It is not their Love to Piety and Virtue, but merely their being afraid of Hell, which makes them have any Sense of Religion; and therefore they will venture as far as safely they may without Danger. And tho' they are now careful not to be better than needs must,
were

126 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

were Hell out of sight they would be as wicked as they could; and I think Lukewarmness is too good a Name for this.

3dly, Another Symptom of Lukewarmness is, when Men carefully avoid all the severe and difficult Parts of Religion; such as Mortification and Self-denial, plucking out of Right Eyes, and cutting off Right Hands; weaning our Affections from all the Delights of Sense; living in a great Contempt of this World, and Neglect of Bodily Pleasures. Such Men are for a soft and easy Religion, which may reconcile a Life of Sense with the Hope of Heaven: It is no part of their Religion, to rectify the Habits and Temper of their Minds, to spiritualize our Conversation, to *be crucified to this world*, and to *have our conversation in Heaven*, and to live upon the Hope of unseen things. These are Duties which no Man can think of, but he who is seriously and heartily religious, and has a prevailing Love and Zeal for God and another World.

Thus in the next place, a lukewarm Religionist will be at no great Pains and Trouble in doing good. He may do some kind Offices when they fall in his Way, but this is none of his Work and Business; and he will be sure to take care that he suffers no Inconvenience by doing good to others. In short, Lukewarmness makes Men very much un-

con-

Concerning Lukewarmness. 127

concerned about the public State of Religion, whether Virtue or Vice prevail in the World; which is a certain Proof, whatever Pretences they may make to Religion and Virtue, they have no great Love and Zeal for it. It is impossible to be truly virtuous, without abhorring Wickedness: And to see Wickedness prevail in the World, to the Dishonour of God, and to the Destruction of Mens Souls, without a just Grief and Indignation; to make a Jest of Wickedness, or to suffer others to make a Jest of it; and to chuse the Friendship of wicked Men, the Enemies of God and of all Goodness; shews which side we would be of, if we durst: That whatever Pretences we make to Religion and Virtue, are but mere Pretences; for we are not such Friends to Virtue as to be Enemies to Vice.

Thus I have briefly shown you what this Lukewarmness is, both as to the Faith and Practice of Christianity; which is a Temper so abhorred by our Saviour, that he threatens to *spue them out of his mouth*; that is, to reject and disown them, as the vilest Excrements. And I dare appeal to any Man, who considers what I have now said, whether there be not just Reason for it.

The Faith of such Men is worse than Infidelity; they betray the Cause of Religion, by pretending to own it. All Men are aware of open and professed Enemies; but when pretended Friends, such lukewarm Believers,

128 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

lievers, show such an Indifference, such a mean Opinion of the Faith which they profess; this confirms the Infidel, that there is no Danger in Infidelity, and gives others too just a Suspicion that themselves are Infidels. And such little Intimations of pretended Friends, do more Mischief, than all the Opposition of professed Enemies.

It is certain that there is nothing in such a lukewarm Faith, that can recommend them to God or to our Saviour. For suppose they do believe that *Christ* is the Eternal Son of God, who became Man, and preached the Gospel, and died upon the Cross, and rose again from the Dead; if at the same time they think it indifferent whether Men believe this or not, and that they may be saved without it, and that it is very uncharitable to disturb the World with zealous Disputes for this Faith, let any Man tell me whether this be to Honour or Reproach our Saviour: For if it be Indifferent whether Men believe this or not, then it is Indifferent whether it be True or False; and then Faith and Infidelity are both alike Indifferent; and what is Indifferent to be believed, was certainly Indifferent to be done; and then our Saviour might have spared all his Humiliation and Sufferings, which it seems he underwent to little purpose, without any just and necessary Reason for it. But I hope they do not expect he should be their Saviour too upon these Terms, when they

they think they have so little need of him. And as for their Pretence to Religion and Virtue, it is certain there is nothing real in it, it is all Art and Imitation, a lifeless Image of Religion; they are not so wicked as some other Men, but all the Good they do is Force, not Nature. When this is the public State of any Church or Nation professing Christianity, our Saviour utterly rejects them, roots them out, will not suffer them any longer to be called by his Name, to which they are so great and public a Scandal; and this is Spewing them out of his Mouth. And as for private Christians who sink into this *Laodicean* Lukewarmness, our Saviour withdraws all the Influences of his Grace and Spirit, and then from being Lukewarm they quickly grow Cold, apostatize from the Faith, and honestly renounce all their vain and formal Pretences to Godliness. Indeed Lukewarmness is a natural Disposition to Apostacy and Infidelity; when Men have no Love and Zeal for their Religion, they will easily be laughed, or tempted, not to say disputed, out of it; for Lukewarmness itself is the most absurd, unaccountable, unjustifiable Folly in the World. If there be any such thing as Religion, it is certainly a Matter of the greatest Concernment, and it is a Reproach to any Man's Understanding to trifle in it. If we will be Religious, let us be Religious to some purpose; let us be Religious to save

130 *Concerning Lukewarmness.*

our Souls, which is the true End and Design of Religion: And that requires the greatest Strength and Vigor, Zeal and Fervor of Mind. We must be in very good earnest if we resolve to go to Heaven; we must be as good as we can, and do all the good we can, and still endeavour to the uttermost to be and to do better. It is a vain thing to think of chusing a little Religion, just enough to carry us to Heaven; for that Man has no Religion at all who can be contented with a little. Religion is to *serve God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.* And that which is less than All is not an acceptable Service of God, because God is greater than All. Let us no longer halt between Two Opinions; if God be God serve him, if *Baal* be God serve him. If Christ came from God to show us the Way to Heaven, let us firmly believe in him; let us study his Gospel, vindicate his Name and Religion, and propagate his Faith and Knowledge in the World, with such a Zeal as becomes the only Way and Means of Salvation, which we ought no more to part with than with our Souls.

If we chuse Heaven before Earth, Eternity before Time, if we resolve to avoid the Miseries and obtain the glorious Rewards of the next Life, let us forsake Earth for Heaven, and make Time subordinate to Eternity. These are not indifferent things, nor can a
wise

Concerning Lukewarmness. 131

wise Man think of them with cool lukewarm Passion. There are such Difficulties in the Way to Heaven, as a lukewarm Formalist can never conquer; and therefore if we would act wisely, we should lay aside all Thoughts of Heaven, or resolve to pursue it with our utmost Strength and Vigor. And as Lukewarmness betrays all the natural Succours of Reason, and forfeits the supernatural Assistances of Grace, so this will engage the Divine Power on our side, and make us in all things *more than conquerors, through Christ who loved us, and gave himself for us.* For his Spirit that is in us will be greater and more powerful than the Spirit that is in the World.



S E R M O N V I I I .

How to work out our own Salvation.

P H I L . ii . 12, 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

IN these Words there are Three Things to be considered :

I. The Duty we are exhorted to ; *to work out our own salvation.*

II. The Manner of doing it, *with fear and trembling.*

III. The Motive and Encouragement to it ; *for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

I. The Duty, *to work out our own salvation* ; this is equivalent to that Exhortation in St. Peter, 2 Pet. i. 10. *Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your*

calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For Salvation in my Text signifies our Right and Title to that Salvation which the Gospel promises; which, if we secure in this World, we shall certainly at last obtain the End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls. And our *Calling and Election* in St. Peter, signifies also that State of Salvation to which we are called by the Preaching of the Gospel; which makes us the chosen and *elect people of God*, and *heirs of salvation*. And to *make this calling and election sure*, *βέβαιον*, firm and stedfast, is so to secure our standing in this blessed State, that we never fall from it, and finally miss of our great Hopes; and *κατεργάζεσθαι*, in my Text, to *work out our salvation*, signifies the same thing; to complete and perfect this great Work of our Salvation, to persist to the End, to continue faithful unto Death, that we may obtain everlasting Life. For both St. Paul and St. Peter write to profess Christians, who had already made a good Beginning, who had embraced the Faith of Christ, and forsaken their Pagan Vices; and therefore the Apostles do not here exhort them merely to take Care of their Souls, and to put themselves into a State of Salvation, by believing in Christ, and obeying his Gospel, but to work out their Salvation, and to *make their calling and election sure*; that is, so to confirm and strengthen themselves

selves in the Faith and Obedience of *Christ*, that they might persevere unto the End, and as far as it is possible, put their Salvation out of all Danger and Hazard. What Reason there is for this you shall hear anon: But I fear there are many amongst us, who never yet seriously thought of saving their Souls, nor, notwithstanding their Profession of *Christianity*, have made one Step towards it. And it will be necessary to say something in the first place to these Men.

One would think it impossible, that Men who profess to believe the Gospel, that is, the Promises of Eternal Life, and the Threatnings of Eternal Death, could be so perfectly stupid as not seriously to consider what they must do to be saved, and how they may escape the endless Miseries of the next Life; or so wretchedly careless of their own eternal Happiness, as not heartily to resolve to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel, to do whatever that requires of us to enter into Life; and to avoid all those Paths, how charming and inviting soever, which lead to Death; or that they should be so foolishly absurd as to resolve to get to Heaven, and avoid Hell, without seriously applying themselves to do what is necessary to both. Is there any Thing in the World of greater Concern to us than Eternal Happiness, or Eternal Misery? Can any Man despise the Promises of Immortal Happiness?

This is impossible. The Desire of Immortality is as necessary as the Love of Life and Being; it will admit of no Dispute or Reasoning, as some meaner Advantages may do. But where there can be no Competition, as there cannot in that which is the greatest and the highest Happiness, there can be no doubt what to chuse: Nor can any Man chuse to be miserable; and eternal Death and Misery carries so much Terror in it's very Name, that we cannot bear the Thoughts of it. Consider then, I beseech you, what a Madness and Folly it is, not to lay these Things seriously to Heart; when eternal Happiness or Misery must be the Portion, there is no Difficulty in the Choice; nay indeed, it is impossible that ye should chuse to be miserable, or refuse to be happy. But how afraid soever ye are of Hell, it must be your Portion if ye resolve to be wicked; and how desirous soever ye are of Heaven, ye must never expect to get thither without Faith and Obedience. This indeed has some Difficulty in it, and there are few that would chuse the rugged Paths of Virtue, though they lead to immortal Life. The Gratification of our sensual Lusts and Appetites give more present Ease and Satisfaction, and put Heaven and Hell out of Sight; and most Men are willing to be deceived: And though they are desirous to go to Heaven and escape Hell, yet they are not willing to think much of
either,

either, while the Glories and Pleasures of this World are in View. And thus they live and sin on without Thought, till it is too late to think, till Death summons them to Judgment; and their vain and fruitless Hopes of Heaven, which made them never the better Men, turn into Horror and Despair, and a fearful Expectation of eternal Vengeance. Let me therefore in the first place persuade such Men seriously to resolve to begin to be religious, and to take Care of their immortal Souls: And the longer they have deferred this, the greater Reason there is to delay no longer: Not to flatter themselves with the empty Name and Profession of Christianity; with a mere *form of godliness while they deny the power of it*. If they in good earnest resolve to go to Heaven, let them impartially consider what the Gospel Terms of Salvation are, and not expect a Crown of Righteousness without being righteous.

But 2dly, The Exhortation of my Text principally concerns another Sort of Men, those who are *Christians* not only in Name and Profession, but in Practice too. That as they have seriously and in good earnest resolved upon a religious Course of Life to save their Souls, so they would take Care to confirm and strengthen their pious Resolutions, and attain to such Degrees and Measures of Holiness and Virtue, as may make their Salvation

vation secure against all the Assaults and Temptations of the World and the Flesh, and give them a joyful Expectation of immortal Life ; this is to *work out our salvation, and to make our calling and election sure.* And there is the same Reason for this, that there is for taking Care of our Souls. For how hopeful soever our Beginnings are, if at last we are conquered by the Temptations of the World, and forsake the good Ways of God, the latter End of such a Man is worse than his Beginning. There is no Reward promised but to those who finally conquer ; but if one perseveres to the End, he shall be saved. We live here in a State of War ; and while we live in Bodies of Flesh and Blood, and in the midst of a thousand tempting Objects, we are in continual Danger till we have got our Enemies under our Feet.

Let us then consider how we may obtain such a perfect Conquest as will make our Salvation secure, and give us a firm and unshaken Hope of immortal Life. Now the general Direction for this, is a constant Exercise and Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues ; which increases our Strength, and weakens Temptations : For Habits grow by Exercise, and make the Practice of Religion so easy, natural, and pleasant, that the Temptations of this World lose their Sting and Power, and are easily repelled. There is no
such

such lasting Principle of Action; as the Pleasure we take in doing any thing. It is the Uneasiness of the Divine Laws to a carnal Mind which makes Men averse to them; and it is the Pleasure of Sin which tempts Men to Disobedience; and therefore whatever makes the Duties of Religion our Delight and Pleasure, will make them our Choice too. The Laws of God are in their own Nature easy and pleasant; and that they are thought severe and difficult, is wholly owing to the Corruption of human Nature: But when a constant and even Course of Virtue has changed our Affections, then the Ways of God will grow pleasant again, and we shall find by Experience what Wisdom tells us, that *all her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*; and what our Saviour tells us, that *his yoke is easy and his burthen light*. Now when that Aversion which a carnal Mind has against the Laws of God, is turned into Pleasure and Delight, all the Difficulties of Religion vanish; and it will not be easy to tempt a Man to transgress or neglect his Duty, who takes the greatest Pleasure in doing it. When we *hunger and thirst after righteousness*; when with our Saviour it is our *meat and drink to do the will of our heavenly Father*, we may as soon be tempted to reject our daily Food, as to neglect the Worship of God, and all just Opportunities of doing Good. This is at least

one Sense of what our Saviour tells us in the viith of *Matthew*, ver. 24, 25, 26, 27. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.* Where our Saviour tells us, that it is Obedience to his Laws which will confirm our Faith, and secure us from Apostacy, whatever Storms and Tempests assault us: Whereas a Man who hears his Sayings, but takes no Care to practise them, will soon be frightened out of his Faith when he must suffer any Thing by it. Like the second Sort of Seed in the Parable of the Sower, which fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away, *Matt. xiii. ver. 5, 6.* That is, as our Saviour himself expounds it, *verses 21, 22. He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and*
anon

anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while ; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. That Seed has no Root which brings forth no good Fruit ; but then it takes Root, increaseth and flourisheth, when we give up ourselves to the Obedience of the Faith, and digest the Word into Principles of Life and Action, when we grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; then we shall be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; which will secure our Standing, and increase our Reward.

This is the general Direction how to *work out our salvation*, and to *make our calling and election sure* : To live in the constant Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues, which, how uneasy and difficult soever at first, will grow easy by Exercise, and increase our Strength to resist all Temptations : Which all the Arguments and Motives of our Religion cannot do, without accustoming ourselves to bear the Yoke of Christ. But besides this, there are some particular Graces and Virtues, which if improved and strengthened will give Strength and Security to all the rest. These St. Peter gives us an Account of in 2 Pet. i. ver. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. *Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ;*
and

and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Verse before, St. Peter takes notice of the Power and Efficacy of the Gospel-promises of immortal Life, to renew and sanctify our Natures, and to transform us into the Image of God; *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the World thro' lust:* And yet he adds, that besides these Promises it is necessary to add to our Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly-kindness, and Charity, to make us fruitful in all good Works; and, as it immediately follows, *to make our calling and election sure.* These are the great Principles of the Christian Life: And I shall briefly shew you how necessary they are to preserve us from all the Temptations of the World, and to give us a glorious Victory over it.

I. The Foundation of all must be laid in Faith; we must first believe, and then add to our *faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, &c.* Where Faith signifies the Christian Faith, or believing in Christ. We are called to the Knowledge and Faith of Christ, and

and are elected in Christ Jesus; and therefore we must first believe in Christ, which is our holy Calling, and makes us the elect and chosen People of God, and Heirs of all his Promises, before there can be any Place for this Exhortation to *make our calling and election sure*. Let us then in the first place take Care to be sincere and hearty Believers, to confirm and strengthen our Faith, which is our Victory over this World. *For who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God?* John i. 5. This gives a sacred Authority to his Person, and an inviolable Sanction to his Laws, that the Son of God himself came into the World to reveal the Will of God to us, and to preach the glad Tidings of Salvation. For, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* reasons, *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be preached by the Lord?* Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3. The like he observes in the xth Chap. ver. 28, 29. *He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?*

Thus

Thus in the xiith Chap. ver. 25. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.* It is this Faith which gives us the most absolute Security of the Love of God to Sinners; That God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. For herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, 1 John iv. 10. This is of the greatest Concernment to us of any Thing in the World, to be assured of the Good-will of our Heavenly Father; and we cannot have a more sensible Demonstration of it than this: For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32. In him we receive the adoption of sons; for we are made the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus; and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

It is this Faith in the Blood of Christ alone, that entitles us to the Forgiveness of our Sins: For he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, to reconcile us unto God. It is this Love of Christ which is the most powerful Principle of Obedience; for the love of
Christ

Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for us, that we who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. For now we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and therefore must glorify God both with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are God's.

It is this which gives us not only the Promises of immortal Life, but the most sensible and irresistible Proofs of a glorious Resurrection. For he hath conquered, he hath abolished Death, by dying for us; and by his Resurrection from the Dead, *hath brought life and immortality to light.* By Death he hath conquered him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

This may satisfy us, how necessary Faith in Christ is, to all the Ends and Purposes of Religion: It answers all the Wants and Necessities of a Sinner; it makes us the Sons and Children of God; entitles us to the Forgiveness of Sins, and the Promises of immortal Life; it renews and sanctifies our Nature, and makes us give up ourselves entirely to the Obedience of Christ, *who hath loved us, and given himself for us:* It reconciles us to some of the most difficult Duties in Religion, such as loving Enemies, and for-

giving Injuries, especially the Offences of our Christian Brethren, because *God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.*

An Infidel has none of these Reasons, Motives, and Encouragements to Obedience; he has no Interest in what Christ hath done and suffered, no Right to those Promises which he hath made in his Gospel; no Title to the Pardon of Sins, nor to that Heaven which Christ hath purchased only for his own Disciples: In a word, he has no Saviour, no Mediator, which is the great Support of Christians, and the only sure Refuge of Sinners. Let us then secure our Faith against all the Assaults of Infidels; for the Strength of our Faith is the great Security of our Perseverance; especially if we add to our *Faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge*, as it follows in this Text, we shall then *work out our salvation, and make our calling and election sure.*

Idly, We must add to our *faith, virtue, ἀρετή*, which, as learned Men observe, cannot signify in this place what we call moral Virtue, but as the Word sometimes signifies, the Strength and Courage of our Minds, or a fearless and undaunted Resolution in professing the Faith of Christ, and discharging all other Parts of our Duty both towards God and Man; for many times there is great Need of Courage to secure our Faith: Such a Courage as sets us above the Fear of Men; as our Saviour exhorts his Disciples, *Fear not them*

who

who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, Matth. x. 28.

It requires great Christian Courage and Fortitude to support us against all the Terrors of the World; when we see Rods, and Axes, and Gibbets ready prepared to assault our Faith. And as Faith must inspire us with this Christian Courage, so this Courage must defend our Faith: We must oppose the Fear of God, to the Fear of Men; the Fear of Hell, and all the endless Miseries of Infidels and Apostates, to the Fears of this present Life. A fearful and timorous Mind can never preserve it's Faith secure; great Fears are apt to alter our Judgment and Opinion of Things; and when we see how much we must suffer for our Faith, we shall be apt to examine it over again, with an Inclination to Infidelity, and that will infallibly make us Infidels. Or if Men are so well instructed in the Reasons of their Faith, that they cannot be Unbelievers, yet a great Fear will tempt them to conceal and to deny their Faith, which is not better than Infidelity: For our Saviour tells us, *He that denieth me before men* (whatever his inward and secret Belief is) *him will I deny before my Father and his holy angels.* For publicly to own and profess the Faith of Christ (that is, to give a public Testimony to Christ and his

Religion, when God calls us to it) is as much our Duty as it is to believe: According to what St. Paul tells us, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. That Faith in the Heart, without Confession with the Mouth, will not save us.

But Christian Courage is not only necessary to the public Profession of the Christian Faith, but many Times is as necessary to the Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues; to harden us against all the Scorn and Reproaches of bad Men: If it be our Lot to live in a wicked and adulterous Generation, as our Saviour speaks, wherein the Worship of God, Temperance, Chastity, and all other Christian Graces and Virtues, are made a mere jest, and exposed to the utmost Contempt. A Man who is afraid to be laughed at, and has not Courage enough to bear Reproach, must in many Cases, when he falls into such Company, not only patiently hear the Being and Providence of God, all the sacred Mysteries of the Christian Faith, and the glorious Hopes of Christians, prophanely ridiculed, without opening his Mouth in Defence of God, his Saviour, and his most holy Religion; but must laugh with the Company, and, whatever he thinks himself, must seem to be one of them; nay, in many Cases must comply with their Vices,

and

and run with them into the same Excess of Riot: Which is a very dangerous State: for our Saviour tells us, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels,* Mark viii. 38. If then we would work out our salvation, and make our calling and election sure, let us add to our faith, virtue; let us harden ourselves against all the Fear and Shame of the World, and with an undaunted Resolution profess the Faith of Christ, and practise all the Virtues of the Christian Religion: Let us always fear God more than Men, and chuse rather to please God than Men; and with the primitive Christians glory in our Sufferings for Christ and our most holy Faith, and rejoice that we are thought worthy to suffer Shame for his Name; for great will our Reward be in Heaven.

But III^{dly}, We must add also to *virtue, knowledge*; that is, as the Apostle speaks, we must *grow in the knowledge of Christ*: We must endeavour after the most perfect Knowledge that we can attain to, of all the Mysteries of the Christian Faith. As Fear tempts many Men to renounce their Faith, so Ignorance exposes them to all the Arts and Impostures of Heretics, *who corrupt the faith*; and a

corrupt Faith is many times worse than none at all. Such Heretics there were in the Apostles Days, and have been more or less in all Ages of the Christian Church: And there is hardly any ancient Heresy to be named, which we have not some sad Example of in our Days. There are indeed many innocent Errors in Matters of pure Speculation, which do no great Hurt to Religion, nor have any bad Influence upon Men's Lives; But there are others, which the Apostle calls *damnable heresies*, which subvert the very Foundations of the Christian Faith, or the Christian Life and Practice. I might instance at large in the corrupt Doctrines of the Church of Rome, so directly contrary to the true Christian Faith and Worship; and which in their natural Consequences give such Indulgence to Men's Lusts and Vices, that if they can persuade themselves to believe them, they may be as wicked as they please, and yet flatter themselves that they are in the only infallible Way to Heaven. Such, to be sure, are damnable Heresies, which betray Men to a Security in sinning, which will certainly damn them. But I hope we are all pretty well aware of these Cheats; and therefore shall take some brief Notice of what is nearer Home. I shall not now concern myself with the Deists, who reject and despise all Divine Revelation, and laugh at the Fable
of

of *Christ*, as they think and call it: For these Men reject all Divine Faith, and Divine Knowledge; and my present Business is only with the Corrupters of the Christian Faith.

Now the most pernicious Heretics amongst us, are those who deny the Divinity of *Christ*, and make the Eternal Son of God a mere Creature, or, which is less than that, a mere Man: For this subverts the very Foundations of our Religion, and alters the whole Scheme of Christianity. I have already briefly shewed you, how necessary Faith in *Christ*, as the Eternal Son of God, is to all the Purposes of the Christian Life: To assure us of the Love of God to Sinners; of the Expiation and Forgiveness of our Sins; of a glorious Resurrection to immortal Life, beyond what the Promises of a mere Prophet, though the most excellent Prophet, could ever give us; and how powerful the Love of the Eternal Son of God, in becoming Man, and dying upon the Cross for our Sins, is, to engage us to live to him who died for us, above all the Authority of other Lawgivers and Prophets. So that those who believe *Christ* to be but a mere Man, lose all the Advantages of the true Christian Faith, and true Christian Hope, to reform their Lives, and improve them in all Christian Graces.

The many Mistakes about the Justification of Sinners, have also very fatal Consequences. I shall not now take Notice of the particular Disputes, and different and contrary Hypotheses about the Justification of Sinners, which would be too far out of my Way at present; but shall only say this in short, That all such Notions of the Grace of God, and Justification of Sinners, which encourage bad Men, continuing so, to hope for Salvation, are of the most pernicious Consequence to Men's Souls, as exposing them to all the Temptations of the World, when they think there is no great Danger in gratifying their Lusts. I confess, I wonder how any Man who ever read the Gospel, can be imposed on by such Doctrines as these; when our our Saviour himself so expressly tells us, *Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*: Which is so often repeated, and is so universally the Doctrine of all his Apostles; that *without holiness no man shall see God*; that *he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, and he that committeth sin is of the devil*: That *Christ came into the world, to destroy the works of the devil*: That *Christ died for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*: When the

the whole Design of the Gospel is to encourage Men to the Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues, by the glorious Promises of immortal Life; and to deter them from all Sin and Wickedness, by the Threatnings of eternal Death: I say, these Things considered, I cannot but wonder that any Man should so expound those great Gospel-Doctrines of the free Grace of God, the Satisfaction of *Christ*, and the Imputation of his Righteousness, to such a Sense, as contradicts and overthrow the whole Design of the Gospel, and the most express Declarations of *Christ* and his Apostles. I need not tell you, that such Men are ignorant of the true Mystery of our Redemption by *Christ*; for it is certain *Christ* never intended to save any impenitent and unreformed Sinner; and therefore never purchased Pardon and immortal Life for such Men. But these few Instances may satisfy us how necessary it is to add to our *virtue, knowledge*; without which we are liable to such fatal Mistakes, as will betray us to a Liberty in sinning, and destroy our Souls. And therefore we must diligently read and study the Holy Scriptures, and thank God that we are Members of such a Church, as not only allows us this Liberty, but exhorts and encourages us to it. We must carefully attend upon the public Ministry of the Word, and consult our Spiritual

The many Mistakes about the Justification of Sinners, have also very fatal Consequences. I shall not now take Notice of the particular Disputes, and different and contrary Hypotheses about the Justification of Sinners, which would be too far out of my Way at present; but shall only say this in short, That all such Notions of the Grace of God, and Justification of Sinners, which encourage bad Men, continuing so, to hope for Salvation, are of the most pernicious Consequence to Men's Souls, as exposing them to all the Temptations of the World, when they think there is no great Danger in gratifying their Lusts. I confess, I wonder how any Man who ever read the Gospel, can be imposed on by such Doctrines as these; when our our Saviour himself so expressly tells us, *Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*: Which is so often repeated, and is so universally the Doctrine of all his Apostles; that *without holiness no man shall see God*; that *he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, and he that committeth sin is of the devil*: That *Christ came into the world, to destroy the works of the devil*: That *Christ died for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*: When the

the whole Design of the Gospel is to encourage Men to the Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues, by the glorious Promises of immortal Life; and to deter them from all Sin and Wickedness, by the Threatnings of eternal Death: I say, these Things considered, I cannot but wonder that any Man should so expound those great Gospel-Doctrines of the free Grace of God, the Satisfaction of *Christ*, and the Imputation of his Righteousness, to such a Sense, as contradicts and overthrow the whole Design of the Gospel, and the most express Declarations of *Christ* and his Apostles. I need not tell you, that such Men are ignorant of the true Mystery of our Redemption by *Christ*; for it is certain *Christ* never intended to save any impenitent and unreformed Sinner; and therefore never purchased Pardon and immortal Life for such Men. But these few Instances may satisfy us how necessary it is to add to our *virtue, knowledge*; without which we are liable to such fatal Mistakes, as will betray us to a Liberty in sinning, and destroy our Souls. And therefore we must diligently read and study the Holy Scriptures, and thank God that we are Members of such a Church, as not only allows us this Liberty, but exhorts and encourages us to it. We must carefully attend upon the public Ministry of the Word, and consult our Spiritual

154 *How to work out, &c.*

tual Guides and Pastors, and advise with our Christian Friends, and pray heartily to God to open the Eyes of our Understanding, and to preserve us from all dangerous Errors and Mistakes in the Christian Faith and Practice.

S E R-



SERMON IX.

How to work out our own Salvation,

PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

4thly, **W**E must add to Knowledge, *Temperance*, ἐμεγάρτεια, which signifies such a Strength of Mind as governs all our sensual Appetites and Inclinations, and brings them under the Restraints and Government of the Divine Laws. A Fondness for Bodily Pleasures is the great Corruption of Human Nature, that fleshly Principle which lusts against the Spirit; which must be mortified and subdued, if we would walk safely, and preserve our Innocence and Virtue in the midst of all the Temptations of this Life. I need not prove this, which every one may feel in himself; The Love of
Bodily

Bodily Pleasures is the great Temptation of all; this will weaken or corrupt our Faith, soften and effeminate our Minds, destroy our Natural Courage, and betray all the Succours of Religion, and so cloud and darken our Understandings, as to expose us to all the Impostures of Hereticks: As was evident in the *Gnosticks*, to whom some Learned Men think the Apostle alludes in this Place, who under a Pretence of more perfect Knowledge, taught and practised the vilest Lusts. The Apostle tells us, *If we live after the flesh we shall die; but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.* And therefore our Salvation can never be secure, till this fleshly Principle be brought into Subjection to the Spirit. This is a very doubtful Victory at first, while Men retain a great Affection for these sinful Pleasures, though they are so over-awed by the Fear of God, that they dare not freely enjoy them. For a secret Love will very often prevail over our Fears; and when our Passions are fired by the Presence of a tempting Object, we are apt to forget our After-Reckoning, and to yield ourselves willing Slaves and Captives to our Lusts; and therefore our greatest Security is in such a degree of Temperance, as sets us farthest out of the reach of Temptations. An absolute Contempt of bodily Pleasures is hardly to be expected from us, while we live in these Bodies; for they are, and always will

will be thought very agreeable, while we have our Senses about us to taste them: Nay, such a perfect Indifference as makes us wholly unconcerned for these Bodies and all their Enjoyments, does not agree neither with our present State; and those who think to attain to this Contempt and Indifferency, by perpetual Austerities of Life, and denying themselves the use of the most innocent Enjoyments, do so over-do the other way, that it is very great odds that at one time or other they will break through all these Restraints, and make themselves amends for it, as they think, by as violent a Pursuit of their Lusts: For Nature will not bear a perpetual Force, and when it gets loose will not easily admit of any new Restraints.

As God hath implanted these Natural Appetites and Inclinations in us, and hath furnished the World with all Variety of Objects for their Entertainment, so he does allow us an Innocent and Virtuous Enjoyment of them; but yet he has prescribed such Bounds and Measures to them as we must not pass: The natural Measure is what becomes the Modesty, Honour, and Dignity of Human Nature; we may enjoy them as far as it becomes Reasonable Creatures to enjoy them; that is, while we distinguish between Soul and Body, and the Pleasures of both, and give the Preference to our better Part: And this is the natural Rule and Principle of Temperance. But
the

the Corruption of Human Nature makes mere Natural Reason an unsafe Guide, and too weak a Principle to govern our Passions; and therefore God in his Law hath prescribed the Measures of them, and enforced our Obedience with the Promises and Threatnings of Life and Death; which are very powerful Arguments: And yet we daily see that too many Men break through all this too. But the Gospel of our Saviour has furnished us with a more powerful Principle; he hath given us his Holy Spirit to Renew and Sanctify our Natures; and it is this Spiritual Life which must subdue and conquer the Earthly Principle: As our Spiritual Part gets Strength, our Sensual Desires more easily submit. When our Conversation is in Heaven, and all our Hopes, and Desires, and Expectations there, this World, and all the Things of it, will appear too little to stand in Competition with such Happiness and Glory: When we relish the Pleasures of Religion, the Divine Pleasures of knowing God, and singing his Praise, the Pleasures of Innocence and Virtue, of a good Conscience, and great Hopes, we shall less want the Pleasures of Sense, and value them less. It is in vain to persuade Men out of their Pleasures, till you can offer them some greater Pleasures in their room; and they will not long be persuaded to reject their old beloved Enjoyments, till they have a true Taste and Relish of those Diviner Pleasures.

tures. And therefore as Temperance, or the Government of our sensual Appetites and Inclinations, is absolutely necessary to secure our standing against all the Assaults of fleshly Lusts, so the most easy and effectual way to reduce our Sensual Inclinations under Government, is to live in the Spirit, and to walk after the Spirit; for *if we walk after the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*

5thly, To Temperance we must add Patience, which is necessary to support us under long and difficult Trials. Courage and Fortitude of Mind, as I shewed you before, is necessary to encounter all the Fears and Terrors of the World; but Patience must give Perseverance to our Courage, that we may endure to the end, and receive a Crown of Life. Many Men who in the Times of Persecution have made a bold Confession of the Faith of Christ, and for a while stood their ground against the most violent and furious Assaults, have not been able to hold out in a long and hopeless Siege. And therefore the Apostle to the *Hebrews* exhorts us to encourage ourselves with the Examples of Martyrs and Confessors; and especially to look unto *Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith.* Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience

tience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. And throughout that Chapter he uses great Variety of Arguments to persuade and encourage us patiently to bear whatever God thinks fit to lay on us, which are but his Fatherly Corrections and Chastisements which he will greatly Reward.

But besides this, there is great need of Patience in all the Passages of the Christian Life; not only to bear the Persecution of our Enemies, but the Weakness, the Forwardness, Injuries and Offences of our Christian Brethren; not only to suffer for the Name of Christ, but to persist in the Exercise of laborious Virtues, and to resist all the flattering Temptations of this Life; which very often Conquer, by their repeated Importunities, when they have been conquered in a single Combat: In a word, we have need of Patience to expect the long Delays of a Reward, and neither to let go our Hopes, nor abate our Zeal; as the Apostle tells us, *For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise, Heb. x. 36.* Patience is a persevering

severing Grace, and that will crown our Faith, and put us into the Possession of our Hopes.

There are Three Things remain which the Apostle recommends to us, as the most effectual Means to *make our calling and election sure*; *Godliness, Brotherly-kindness, and Charity*; which he does not here consider merely as particular Graces and Virtues, but as the great Principles of all Holiness and Obedience; which will enable us to discharge all the several Parts of our Duty both towards God and Men. *Godliness* signifies a great and constant Sense of God, and such suitable Affections as naturally spring from such a Sense: When we make God always present to us, live always as under his Eye, and so meditate on his Nature and Works, as to possess our Souls with a great Love, and Fear, and Reverence of him: This is a lasting Principle of universal Obedience; his All-seeing Eye, will perpetually overawe us, his Sovereign Authority will command us, and quiet all our unruly Passions; his Goodness will make our Obedience cheerful; and his Power will secure us against all other Fears: We shall ascribe all the Blessings we enjoy to his Care and Providence, and ask the Supply of all our Wants from him, and sing his Praises with joyful Hearts. Men may perform all the External Acts of Worship, without true Devotion of Mind; but then

their Worship is nothing worth, and they may easily be tempted to part with it. But those who have this true devout Sense of God, have a true lasting Principle of Devotion, which will express itself in all the External Acts of Worship and Obedience. It is this inward Principle of Spiritual Life, which if it abounds in us, as the Apostle speaks, will make us, that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Love of Men is the Second great Principle of all Goodness and Virtue ; as the Apostle tells us, *he that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law* ; and this our Apostle divides into Two Parts ; the *love of the brethren*, and the *love of all mankind*. The First he calls *Brotherly-kindness*, and the Second *Charity*. To love the Brethren, signifies to love all the sincere Disciples of Christ, who are Members of the same Body with us, and in Christ Jesus have received the Adoption of Sons. And this is a peculiar Reason for the mutual Love of Christians, that we are Members of the same Body ; and therefore as St. Paul reasons, ought to have as great a Tenderness and Sympathy for each other, as the Members of the Natural Body have ; that we are all the Children of God, Heirs of the same Promises, and hope to live for ever together in the same Heaven. Now this *Brotherly-kindness* is the Principle of
all

all those peculiar Duties, which Christian Brethren owe to each other; especially that Fundamental one, to preserve the Unity of the Body, the Unity of Faith and Communion, to worship God together with united Hearts and Voices, which is the most effectual means to promote the Edification of the whole Church, and of all particular Christians. Schism destroys the Peace of the Church, and the mutual Love of Christians; and hinders all those mutual Offices of Christian Communion, which tend so much to the Improvement of each other in Faith and Knowledge, and all true Piety and Virtue: This very often occasions the Apostacy of Christians, or betrays them to very great Evils: That this *Brotherly-kindness* is as necessary to secure our standing, as any other Grace or Virtue.

I need say nothing of *Charity*, or the universal Love of Mankind, which, as it is a great Christian Duty, so it is that Universal Principle which prompts us to do all the Good we can, and to do no Hurt to our Neighbour. Men may do a great deal of Good without true Charity, but they will do a great deal of Hurt too: And no Man can be long secure of doing any Good, or that he shall not do the greatest Mischief without it.

Thus I have shewn you, how you *may work out your salvation*; and *make your calling and election sure*; which is the most de-

irable State in this World ; which begins Heaven and all the Joys of it in our Souls, For when we feel ourselves safe, and can say with St. Paul, *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*, we shall view Heaven and all the Glories of it as our Inheritance ; which gives us another kind of Taste of Heaven, than those Men can possibly have, who have no Interest in it, or have no good Reason to hope to have any. When we think seriously of another World, of the Glories of Heaven, and of the Eternal Miseries of the Damned, the least suspicious Thought that we shall finally miss Heaven, is extremely uneasy, and sours all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life : And therefore all Men call very importunately for Assurance, and are very impatient to know by what Means they may be assured of their Salvation. And I much fear, that too hasty an Assurance, when Men flatter themselves that their Salvation is safe when it is very far from being so, whatever present Satisfaction it may give them, very often betrays them to such Securities, that if they should keep their Hopes, yet they will finally miss of Heaven : For when Men think themselves Safe and out of Danger, they very often neglect those Means which alone can make their Salvation safe, and give them any sure and reasonable Hopes of it. This is a Matter of great Moment ;

Moment; and therefore I shall explain it more particularly.

Some Men search into the secret Counsels of God, to find themselves enrolled amongst the Elect People of God, and their Names written in the Book of Life. For if they are God's Elect, their Salvation is sure: And if they can persuade themselves that they are God's Elect, then they believe themselves sure. But we know this very often proves no better than the Delusion of a self-flattering Imagination. They think they deserve to be Elect, and would certainly Elect themselves if they could, and therefore they conclude that God has Elect, them. I shall not now dispute the Doctrine of absolute Election; but the Question is, how any particular Man, without a Revelation, should know that he is Elect? We know that all the sincere Disciples of Christ, are the Elect People of God; for so they are every where called in the New Testament; as the *Jews* were God's Elect People under the Mosaical Law. But yet St. *Peter* exhorts these Elect People, to *make their calling and election sure*: That is, as I have shewn you, to secure their standing in the Faith of Christ, and in the Practice of all Christian Graces; which alone can secure their Election, or give them any reasonable Hopes that they are Elect. An absolute Election is secure already, and we can do nothing to make it more secure and

firm than it is in God's Decree: But this is such a State of Election as we ourselves may and must make sure by Faith and Virtue, &c. And therefore if these Elect People, as they think themselves, should believe God so partial to them, that they may indulge themselves in greater Liberties without any danger than God will allow to other Men, it is to be feared that they may and often do take such Liberties; and that must destroy their Gospel Election, as it destroys their Christianity: And they can have no Reason to believe themselves the Elect of God, unless God's Elect may be very wicked Christians.

This some of them are very sensible of, that they must be in a State of Grace, before they can be sure of their Election; and therefore they are very curious in enquiring after the Signs of Grace, and the Marks of God's Children. And to make their Hopes the more certain, they make as little serve this Purpose as may be; for which Reason they are so very nice in stating what are the lowest Degrees and Measures of Grace, which sometimes they bring so low, that very bad Men may find or fancy some of them in themselves, and then they are God's Elect Children, and shall always continue so: For once a Child of God, and always a Child of God. So that here are Two Principles they build their Hopes on; the Signs of Grace, and the Doctrine of Perseverance: That if they
can

can once find themselves in a State of Grace, they are sure they shall always continue so. This I confess is a very short and compendious Way to Assurance; but these Signs, I fear, may often deceive them. I know no Sign of Grace, but Grace itself; no Sign of Faith, but Believing; no Sign of Temperance, but the Government of our Sensual Inclinations; no Sign of being Righteous, but doing Righteousness: That those who are conscious to themselves, that they are very bad Men, that they do very wicked Things, and neglect to do a great deal of good which it is their Duty to do, fatally to abuse themselves, when they depend upon such Signs of Grace to prove themselves the Children of God; which if they have, it is certain very bad Men which are not God's Children may have; and there is no doubt but they may persevere in such a State as this, if they take no care to reform their Lives; but this will not make their Salvation, but their Damnation sure.

But supposing them to be very good Men, that they know and feel their own Sincerity, this Doctrine of Perseverance, how true soever it be, cannot give them an absolute Security of their Salvation; because we see too many Men, who have been thought to have been very good Men by others, and have believed themselves to have been so, have at last yielded themselves up to the Temptations

tions of the World and the Flesh, and made it too evident to others, whatever they thought themselves, that they are none of God's Children. Now what can be said in this Case? That they were not good Men, and therefore fell away; for if they had been sincerely Good, they would have persevered in Goodness. Suppose this, how can any Man be more secure than they were, that he is a good Man, and that he shall persevere. If the Knowledge of ourselves, and the inward Feeling of the Motions and Passions of our own Minds will not do this, I know not how it can be done. And therefore without disputing the Doctrine of Perseverance, it is certain this alone will not assure us that we shall persevere. For if those who believe themselves very good Men, which is as much as we can believe of ourselves, may fall away, it is certain either that those who are good Men may not persevere; or that those who believe themselves to be as good Men as we believe ourselves to be, may not persevere; and this destroys the absolute Assurance of Perseverance. It is certain, that Perseverance only can crown our Hopes and give us Possession of immortal Life: And therefore there is no other way to *work out our salvation*, and to *make our calling and election sure*, but to secure our Perseverance. And the same Assurance that we have of our Perseverance, the same Assurance we have
of

of Eternal Life. This Assurance is not to be attained on a sudden, but is the Reward of confirmed Habits, and the long Practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues; as the Apostle exhorts the *Hebrews*, *We desire that every one of you do the same diligence*, (that is, be very diligent in doing the same good) *to the full assurance of hope; unto the end that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* This is the way to attain this full Assurance of Hope, to do all the Good we can; and the longer we continue to do so, the more secure we shall be of our persevering to the end. This was the Foundation of *St. Paul's* Hope towards the Conclusion of his Days, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will give me at that day.* A long and steddly Course of Piety and Virtue, a long Experience of our own Strength to resist Temptations, and to perform the most difficult Duties of Religion, is the surest Foundation of our Hopes: That by the Grace of God we shall persevere unto the end: When we find ourselves thoroughly possessed with persevering Graces and Virtues; such as I have now recommended to you from the Exhortation of *St. Peter*, we shall then feel ourselves safe, when we are provided against all
 Assaults

Affaults; and yet not so safe while we live in this World, but we must continue our Care and Diligence^a, if we would persevere unto the end. Which brings me to the Second Part of my Text.

2dly. The Manner how we are to *work out our Salvation; with fear and trembling.* Where by *fear and trembling*, the Apostle does not mean that we should live in perpetual Doubts and Perplexities about our Salvation; which is a very uneasy State of Life, and which there is no Reason for, when we know the plain and safe Way to Heaven. It would be a very perplexing thing indeed, did we certainly know that there were such different States in the other World as Heaven and Hell, and knew not certainly how to obtain the one, or escape the other. But this we certainly know, Faith in Christ, and Obedience to the Gospel, will certainly carry us to Heaven; and Infidelity and Disobedience will as certainly destroy our Souls. And therefore *fear and trembling* cannot relate to the Uncertainty of the Way, which can be the only Reason of such perplexing Fears; but must signify great Care and Caution in our walking in it. Such a Fear as this is very natural in all Matters of great Concern unto us, where a Miscarriage would disappoint all our Hopes, and expose us to the greatest Evils and Miseries without Redress.

^a Heb. vi. 11, 12.

dress. While there is a Possibility of being disappointed, Men will have a Care of growing too secure, whatever Hopes they have of Success: And therefore I shall first briefly show you, what Reason we have for this Fear and Caution. And 2dly, What it is we must be so cautious of.

As for the *First*; There are several Things which may convince us how necessary this Fear and Caution is, throughout the whole Course of the Christian Life.

As 1st. That the Salvation of our Souls is of the greatest Concern unto us: Which, as I have already observed, naturally makes Men cautious. If we miscarry in this, the Damages we shall suffer by it, are no less than the Loss of Eternal Life, and the Miseries of Eternal Death. These are too great Things to be ventured to Chance or Accident; they deserve our utmost Care and Caution, and will certainly have it, if we possess our Minds with a great Sense of the Happiness or Miseries of the next Life. No Man can make this his own Case, that he should finally miss of Heaven, and have his Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, without Fear and Trembling: And such a Fear as this, will inspire us with the utmost Diligence and Caution.

Especially, 2dly, When we see so many sad Examples before us, of Men, who know the Way to Heaven as well as we, but chuse
that

that Broad Way which leads to Death. For we are liable to the same Temptations that they are, and, without great Fear and Caution, may grow as wicked as they; especially when we see so many hopeful Beginnings miscarry. When we see Men of Reputation for Piety and Virtue, who as far as we could judge, and as they themselves believed, had made great Progresses in Religion, and had conquered the Temptations of the World and the Flesh in many sharp and difficult Encounters; I say, when we see such Men first abate their Zeal, and then, by gradual Declensions, grow very cold and indifferent in Religion, and at last comply with the Vices of the Age; *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

For 3dly, While we are in this World, we are in a State of Trial and Temptation; and while we may be tempted, we may be conquered. We have the same Appetites and Inclinations which other Men have, the World is the same to us that it is to them, and the Devil is a very cunning and subtle Adversary, who watches all Opportunities to deceive and destroy; which makes it very necessary to be always upon our Watch; not to remit of our Diligence and Caution, which is our best Defence both against Art and Force.

II. Let us then briefly consider what that Fear and Caution is, which is necessary

to *work out our own Salvation*, and to *make our calling and election sure*. There are many particular Directions of this Nature, suited to the several States, and the different Attainments of Christians, which are of great Use in the Conduct and Government of the Christian Life : But I shall not mention them now, but confine myself to the general End and Design of this Religious Fear and Caution ; which is, to secure our Standing, that we may persevere in the Faith of Christ, and in the Practice of all holy Obedience : For this is the proper Care of Good Men, that they may continue to be good. Now the general Direction for this, is to guard ourselves with all possible Care against the Temptations of this World ; to study Ourselves, our own Passions and Inclinations, and to keep out of the Reach of such Temptations as do most powerfully assault us. But the most effectual means to persevere, is always to be going forward : Not to flatter ourselves that we are already good enough, and have done good enough in the World ; but rather to say with St. Paul, *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing ; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth*

forth unto those which are before : I press toward the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. When Men put a Stop to their Growth and Increase, they will soon decline in Virtue. It is a fatal Symptom, when our Zeal for God and Religion begins to abate; for when our Zeal abates, we shall abate on till we grow cold and dead. This will bring us out of Conceit with the Heroical Examples of Virtue; for we cannot like what we think not fit to imitate: And this by degrees, will give us a mean Opinion of Religion and Virtue itself; for that can be worth little, which we may have too much of. It is certain, the way to persevere, is to increase in Strength; and we can never increase our Strength, without the Growth and Improvement of our Graces. He that stands still, does not work out his Salvation, but thinks he has already done it: But this Religious Fear and Caution never thinks it can be too safe, but will work on as long as the Day of working lasts, and will not think his Work at an end till he receives his Crown.

If we would persevere, as we must not stand still, so we must take care of going backward, of relapsing into our old forsaken Sins, though it be but in some single Instances: For every Sin we commit weakens our Strength to resist the next Assault, and hazards our final Apostacy. Many Men
who

who cannot think of returning to a wicked Course of Life, will yet suffer themselves to be persuaded to some single Acts, which they are resolved never to repeat again. But this is a vain Hope, and a vain Resolution: For when Men once begin to indulge their forsaken Vices, 'tis like launching out into the Deep, and committing ourselves to the Mercies of the Wind and Seas, which puts it out of our power to make to shore again when we please: It puts our Passions into a new Ferment and Disorder, gives us a new Relish of sinful Pleasures, which will not satisfy, but increase our Appetite: And thus Men return to their old Sins again; which gives them less Hopes of their Perseverance, nay sometimes make them lay aside all Hopes that they shall persevere; and then they give themselves up to the Government of their Lusts, and think no more of Heaven or Hell, but take Refuge in Atheism or Infidelity: Or, if they hope to make themselves whole again by new Acts of Repentance, and Repent and Sin, and Sin and Repent, and think themselves safe while their Repentance keeps pace with their Sins, which is the Case of very many, the Devil has taken them in his Snare, which they will never be able to break through.

But *3dly*, I must speak something briefly to the Last Part of my of Text, The Motive

tive and Encouragement thus to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling: *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* I will not now dispute the Manner how the Spirit of God works upon our Minds, which is a vain Enquiry for us, who know not the Philosophy of our own Minds, how we think, or reason, chuse or refuse; and therefore can much less understand how the Divine Spirit works in us and with us. Nor shall I go about to prove, that the Power of willing and doing that which is good, is owing to the Influences and Assistances of the Divine Grace: This is expressly taught in Scripture, and is plain enough till Men perplex themselves with Philosophical Enquiries: And therefore taking it for granted that God does *work in us both to will and to do*, as the Apostle here assures us, I shall consider, *First*, What an Encouragement this is to work out our Salvation. And *2dly*, What Reason this is for Fear and Caution.

As for the *First*, The Encouragement this gives us, that is very plain: For if we seriously apply ourselves to this Work with Vigor and Resolution, we shall never want sufficient Strength and Support to bring it to Perfection, because *it is God that worketh in us.* When we consider the Difficulty of the Work, and the great Opposition we shall meet with in it, we might justly despond,

had

had we no greater Strength to support us than our own: *But the Spirit that is in us is greater than the Spirit that is in the world:* The Law of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus, will make us free from the Law of Sin and Death; that we may say with St. Paul, *I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me.* Whatever our Trials and Temptations are, our Blessed Lord prays for us, as he did for St. Peter, *That our faith fail not.* He proportions our Trials to our Strength, and will not *suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.* And what an Encouragement is this to strive and contend when we are sure of Victory? When Heaven and Immortal Life is the Prize we contend for, and we are sure to win the Prize if we will contend, let us take Courage, and behave ourselves like the faithful Soldiers of Christ, who is *the author and finisher of our faith:* For the Battle is the Lord's, and it is true in this as in all other Cases, *If God be with us, who can be against us?*

2dly, This is a great Reason also for Fear and Caution: For if all our Strength and Support, and Hope of Success be in the Divine Grace, we must above all things take Care not to forfeit these Divine Assistances; for God dispenses his Grace to us in such Measures and Proportions as we are fit to receive, and withdraws his Grace from us

N

when

when we abuse it. We must work, if we would have God work in us and with us: We must keep as much as we can out of the reach of Temptations, and pray, as our Saviour has taught us, *Lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil*, if we would be defended from the Power of Temptations; for God never protects them who tempt themselves. We must pray heartily for the Holy Spirit; for God gives his Spirit only to those who ask him, as our Saviour tells us: And we must have a care of grieving the Holy Spirit of God by suppressing or stifling his holy Motions, or by defiling our Souls with fleshly Lusts, or black and diabolical Passions; for the Holy Spirit will not dwell in an impure Soul. We must endeavour by all means to confirm our Resolutions, and daily press forward towards greater Attainments in Virtue, by meditating frequently and seriously on all the Motives and Arguments of Religion; for these are the Arguments which the Holy Spirit enforces upon our Minds, with such a new Light and Power as conquers all Opposition; which he cannot do, if we will never think of these things ourselves. In a word, the Grace of God is communicated to us in the diligent Use of all the standing Means of Grace; such as Private and Public Prayer, Reading, Hearing, and Meditating on the Word of God, and especially in the Holy Supper of our Lord;

Lord ; here we may receive new and fresh Supplies as we need them, and as we improve them. Which shows us with what Fear and Caution we ought to govern our Lives and all our Actions ; how diligent we should be in doing good, and how fearful of falling into any Sin, lest the Holy Spirit of God should forsake us, and give us up to the Weakness and Folly of our own Minds, and to the Cheats and Impostures of wicked Spirits.

But I need add no more, but only earnestly to persuade you to consider seriously of these Things ; of what vast Concernment it is to work out our Salvation ; how necessary Fear and Caution is to this End ; and what a powerful Argument it is for both, That *God worketh in us both to will and to do.*



S E R M O N X.

Forgiveness of Sins only through
Christ.

A C T S xiii. 38, 39.

Be it known unto ye therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

THE certain Assurance of Pardon and Forgiveness, is the great Support of Sinners, and the only reasonable Encouragement to a serious Repentance and Amendment of Life. This is the fundamental Article of the Religion of a Sinner, which inspires him with true Devotion towards God, with a Reverence for his Laws, and a great Zeal for his Service and Glory. Natural Conscience will fill a Sinner with Remorse

and guilty Fears, but this is only the Repentance of Devils and damned Spirits, not a Repentance unto Salvation, which gives us an Abhorrence of our Sins, and of ourselves for them; and makes us *cease to do evil, and learn to do well*; which requires such a severe Discipline and Mortification, in plucking out Right Eyes, and cutting off Right Hands, that no Man will put himself to so much fruitless Pain and Trouble, when he has no Hopes of Mercy, or only such weak and faint Hopes as cannot resist and conquer the Temptations of this Life. And therefore it is a Matter of the last Consequence unto us, to be well assured of the Forgiveness of our Sins, and by what Means this Forgiveness may be had, if we would prove true and sincere Penitents, and so reform our Lives, as to save our Souls. And this the Apostle gives us an Account of in my Text: *Be it known unto ye therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.*

In which Words there are three Things to be observed.

First, The Person by whom this Forgiveness of Sins is preached to us; *ἀπὸ τούτου*, by that Jesus whom God raised from the dead.

Secondly

only through Christ. 183

Secondly, The Extent of this Forgiveness: And by him we are justified from all those things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Thirdly, The Means whereby we may obtain this Justification and Forgiveness of Sins, by Faith in his Name; by him all that believe are justified.

First, By whom this Forgiveness of Sins is preached to us; by Jesus Christ: Which signifies Two Things,

1st, That he has made these Promises of Forgiveness. And,

2^{dly}, That Forgiveness is preached to us in his Name.

As for the *1st*, I need not prove that he has promised Forgiveness of Sins, which is the great fundamental Promise of the Gospel, expressly taught, repeated, or confirmed almost in every Page of it. There are indeed many Promises of Forgiveness contained in the Law of *Moses*, in the *Psalms* and Prophets, which I shall account for hereafter: But my present Business is, to consider what Security this gives us of the Forgiveness of our Sins. For a Divine Promise is the only sure Foundation of our Faith; all other Arguments, without an express Promise of Forgiveness, can at most only give us some probable Hopes that God will pardon; but no Arguments can conclude necessarily, but

only in a necessary Subject. That if Forgiveness of Sins be an Act of Grace, and Grace be free, that God may Forgive, or may not Forgive, as he pleases, we can never be absolutely certain that he will Forgive without his Promise; and then we have his Truth and Faithfulness for our Security. The best natural Proof we have for Forgiveness of Sins, is the Goodness of God; but this does not necessarily prove, that he will forgive Sinners, for he does not forgive all Sinners. The fallen Angels are the Subjects of his just Vengeance, not of his Pardon; and Thousands of bad Men will be condemned with the Devil and his Angels. And God is as perfectly Just as he is Good; and if we reason only from the natural Notions we have of God, his Justice will as certainly prove that he will not forgive Sin, as his Goodness does that he will: And that proves that we do not argue right from either. For the Divine Attributes do not contradict each other; and yet we know not how to reconcile them, when Goodness will Forgive, or when Justice will Punish, without a Divine Covenant and Promise; which acquaints us by what Rules and Measures God will exercise his Goodness and Justice in the Government of Mankind. Sin indeed, in its own Nature, makes us the Objects of God's Justice; but I know no natural Claim that Sinners have to Pardon and Forgiveness, but by Cove-
nant

nant and Promise. Yes, you'll say, the Light of Nature teaches that God will forgive Penitent Sinners. The Gospel indeed teaches this, but how the Light of Nature alone teaches this, I cannot tell. Does the Light of Nature teach us, that 'tis unjust to punish Penitents? For if it be not unjust to punish, it is not necessary to forgive; and if it be unjust to punish, it is no Grace and Goodness, but Justice to forgive: Both which contradict the general Sense of Mankind, who make no Scruple in a Thousand Cases to punish Penitents; and in all the most pitiable Cases think it an Act of Grace and Favour to forgive. Does the Light of Nature make it necessary for God to admit all Sinners to a State of Repentance; that is, to such a State as entitles all Penitents to Forgiveness? If we believe any thing concerning the Fall of Angels, it was not so with them; and it will not be so with Wicked Men, who die in a State of Impenitence. Which shows that Pardon is not due to Repentance by Nature, but by Covenant: That those who are not under the Covenant of Grace and Pardon, as fallen Angels never were, and as wicked Men after this Life shall not be, how penitent soever we may suppose them to be (which is no hard Supposition when they come to suffer for their Sins) have no Plea left for Pardon. And yet God will be as good then as he is now; but the Covenant of Grace and Mercy is at an end; and what becomes then of all these

Natural

Natural Arguments for the Forgiveness of Penitents, which if they had ever been good, must have been good to Eternity, and must give Security to Devils and damned Spirits of the Forgiveness of their Sins, whenever they repent? And though the Threatnings of Hell Torments will not persuade many Men to Repentance, yet it is impossible to think the Feeling of them should not, had they any Hopes of Pardon. The Example of *Dives* is a Proof of this, who so passionately desired *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* to warn his Brethren against that Place of Torment; and was so fully persuaded that they would repent at the Preaching of one who rose from the Dead; though he was mistaken in that Matter, as *Abraham* tells him; yet it is reasonable to think, that he who was so charitably concerned for the Repentance of his Brethren, that they might avoid those Torments which he now suffered, would have been a sincere Penitent himself, and have brought forth all the sincere Fruits of Repentance, could he have acted his Life over again, and have been admitted to a new State of Repentance; and yet there was no Pardon for him, and God as good as ever he was still.

My Design in all this is, if it be possible, to convince Infidels, who reject Revelation, and all Divine Covenants and Promises, that they can have no Assurance of the Forgiveness of their Sins without a Promise; and then

then it would be no hard matter to convince them, that there are no such Promises to be found, but in the Gospel of our Saviour; that they must believe in Christ for the Remission of their Sins. And I heartily wish many Christians had not given too much Occasion to these Men's Infidelity, by so much magnifying the Light of Nature, and natural Religion, teaching Men to depend more upon the natural Goodness of God for the Forgiveness of Sins, than upon the Covenant of Grace; which makes the Infidel believe that there was no need of a Saviour, or of the Promises of Forgiveness: And so confounds their own Notions of our Redemption by Christ, that they can neither see the Necessity, nor understand the mysterious Love and Goodness of it. That which leads them into this Mistake is, that they meet with such frequent Declarations in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, of the Love and Goodness of God, of his Pity and Compassion to Sinners; that *he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness*: And this they mistake for a mere natural Account of God's Goodness to Sinners; whereas this is only a Declaration of what God in Covenant is. Thus he was in some Measure to the *Jewish Church*, but is more perfectly so under the Christian Covenant. But the Apostle describes the State of the Heathens after another manner; that *being alien,*

aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, they were without hope, and without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. That how graciously soever God declared himself to *Israel*, this did not extend beyond his Covenant, to those who were not in Covenant with him. It is certain, whatever the Divine Nature is, absolutely in itself, it is always the same; and yet the Manifestations of his Grace and Goodness were very different under the Law and the Gospel; which proves that all these Declarations of God's Goodness, which we find in Scripture, do not relate to his absolute Nature, but to his Covenant. He is by Nature the best of Beings; but the Exercise of this Goodness is directed by infinite Wisdom, and fitted to the several Dispensations of Grace and Providence. That though he be always equally Good in himself, the Manifestations of it are not always the same, but plainly differ as much as the Law and the Gospel do. God was very good in both, but the most perfect Declaration of his Grace and Love was reserved for the Gospel: And here we find those Promises of Pardon and Forgiveness which Christ preached, and which are the only Hope and Security of Sinners.

But *2dly.* Forgiveness of Sins is not only preached to us by Christ, who has given us the most express Promises of it, but it is preached to us in his Name; for this is the

Com-

Commission which he gave to his Apostles after his Resurrection from the Dead, that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, Luke xxiv. 47. And we shall understand what this means, if we consider how the Apostles preached Forgiveness of Sins in the Name of Christ. As to show this briefly.

1. The Apostles teaches us that Christ alone hath made Expiation and Atonement for our Sins, and sealed the Covenant of Pardon and Forgiveness with his own Blood: *He died for our sins, he was delivered for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. While we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; *while we were sinners, Christ died for us: We are justified by his blood, and saved from wrath by him*, Rom. v. 8, 9, 10. The Forgiveness of Sins both in the Law of Moses and in the Gospel is attributed to the Atonement and Expiation made for them by Sacrifices. The Legal Sacrifices were only Types of the Great Sacrifice of the Cross; when the Son of God offered up his Human Nature in Sacrifice to his Father for the Redemption of Mankind: And therefore as Christ alone has made Expiation for our Sins, so Forgiveness of Sins must be preached only in his Name; that is, that God for Christ's sake, for the Merits of his Death and Sufferings, will forgive the Sins of Penitents,

Penitents. This is a mighty Consolation to Sinners, to know that Christ hath made an Atonement for Sins with his own Blood; that we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot. Let those who please dispute the Necessity of Satisfaction to the Divine Justice, and reject the Sacrifice of Christ, because they think God could forgive Sin without a Sacrifice; or whatever Reason there might be for a Sacrifice, can never persuade themselves that God would give his own Son to die a Sacrifice for Sin: But it gives the greatest Security to Sinners, to see their Atonement made; and the more mysterious the Love and Goodness is, and of the more inestimable Value the Sacrifice is, the greater Assurance it gives us of the Love of God to Sinners, and of the Merit and Efficacy of the Blood of Christ to cleanse us from all our Sins. We could have no Assurance of Pardon, without an express Promise, as I have already shewn you; but the Expiation of the Blood of Christ, that *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*, is a much greater Security than a mere Promise: This gives the most inviolable Sanction to that Covenant which was purchased and sealed by the Blood of the Son of God; and therefore gives the greatest Authority to all the Promises of that Covenant.

nant. Which shews us of what vast Concernment it is to us firmly and stedfastly to believe the Merits and Expiation of Christ's Blood, to give us the most certain and unshaken Assurance of the Forgiveness of Sins.

2dly. The Apostles teach us, that as Christ alone has made the Expiation for our Sins by his own Blood, so we must obtain the Pardon and Forgiveness of our Sins by Faith in his Blood; *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,* Rom. iii. 24. Christ died for all Mankind, and has made an universal Atonement and Expiation for the Sins of the whole World; as St. Paul tells us, that *one died for all*; but the Virtue and Efficacy of his Death reaches no farther than his own Body, for he is the Saviour of the Body; and therefore it is Faith alone which makes us his Disciples, and the Members of his Body; that can entitle us to that Pardon and Forgiveness which he has purchased with his Blood; and the proper Object of this justifying Faith, is that Blood of Atonement which expiates our Sins, and seals the Covenant of Grace and Pardon. This is the Doctrine of the Gospel; which excludes all Infidels: and if justifying Faith be Faith in the Blood of Christ, must exclude all those who do not believe the Expiation of Christ's Blood for the Forgiveness of Sins:

Sins: Which should make Men have a care of playing the Critics with the Words and Phrases of Scripture, lest they criticise away all their Hopes of Pardon and Salvation.

3dly, To preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in the Name of Christ, is to declare to the World that Power to which Christ is now advanced to forgive the Sins of all true Penitents. Thus our Saviour after his Resurrection acquaints his Apostles, *All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth*: And on this he founds their Commission to preach the Gospel; that is, to preach Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins in his Name to all Nations. Thus St. Peter tells us of Christ: *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. *Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. And what a Consolation is this to Sinners, that he who loved them, and gave himself for them, is now made the Lord and Judge both of the Quick and of the Dead! That their Sacrifice is their High Priest, who intercedes for them with Power and Authority at the Right Hand of God, and there presents himself and his own Blood, as an Atonement for all believing and penitent Sinners! This is not the mere Interest of a Great Favourite, but the Authority of
a High

a High Priest: And who would be without such a Sacrifice and Atonement, and such a High Priest and Mediator? How is it possible that believing and penitent Sinners should miss of Pardon and Heaven, when their Saviour who died for them has the sole Power and Authority to save? We have great Reason to pity Infidels and Heretics, but not to envy them. We have a surer Foundation for our Faith and Hope, than either the mere Light of Nature, or the bare Interest of the most powerful Creature can give them. Let us then believe in Christ for Salvation: Let us obey all the Laws of our Saviour, and do all the good we can in the World; but trust wholly in the Expiation of his Blood for the Forgiveness of our Sins. Let us offer up all our Prayers to God in his Name, and we shall certainly obtain the Forgiveness of our Sins, and inherit his Everlasting Kingdom.

II. I must speak something briefly to the Second Thing I observed in my Text, The Extent of that Pardon and Forgiveness which is preached to us in the Name of Christ: *By him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* For the understanding of which, we must consider what those Sins were, to which the Law of Moses had promised Forgiveness. Now the Law of Moses, strictly so taken, as it is in my Text, promised Forgiveness to no Sins but those to

which it appointed a Sacrifice and Expiation; and those were only such Sins as the Law of *Moses* itself had made, as all Legal Uncleanesses and Pollutions, and their Errors and Mistakes in observing the Rites and Ceremonies of their Law: But there were no Sacrifices appointed for any Immoralities, such as Adultery, Murder, Perjury, and the like; but the severest Executions of Justice were denounced against such Offenders, without Mercy: Nay, any presumptuous Violation even of the Ceremonial Laws, could not be expiated by Sacrifice; and that was called a presumptuous Sin which Men did knowingly: So that the Law of *Moses* allowed no Sacrifice and Expiation for the Breach of the Moral Law, nor for wilful and presumptuous Sins against the Law of *Moses*. Thus *David* tells us in his Penitential Psalm for his Adultery, and Murder of *Uriah*; *Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee; but thou delightest not in burnt-offerings*, Psalm li. 16. That is, his Sins were such for which the Law of *Moses* had appointed no Sacrifice, and which no Legal Sacrifices could expiate. But was there no Pardon then to be had before Christ's appearing in the World, for the Breach of the Moral Laws, for Drunkenness, Adultery, Theft, Murder, and the like? Yes, most certainly there was; but not by the Law of *Moses*, nor by Legal Sacrifices, but by Virtue of that

Covenant

Covenant which God made with *Abraham*, That in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed: that is, that he would send Christ into the World to redeem Mankind; and in Virtue of that Sacrifice which he would in time offer for Sin, God accepted and pardoned sincere Penitents. As *David* immediately adds; *The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God shalt thou not despise.* But this was Gospel Grace, tho' very imperfectly revealed to them under the Law; which Christ has now fully and clearly declared to us in his Gospel, and promised us the full and free Pardon of all our Sins, if we will repent, and believe in his Name. The Heathen Converts were as bad Men as lived in the World, and yet were admitted to Grace and Mercy: As *St. Paul* tells the *Corinthians*; *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of ye, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. Now our Saviour, in short, promises the Forgiveness of all our Sins, excepting the Blasphemy against the

Holy Ghost: *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,* Matth. xii. 31. So that here is but one Sin excepted, and that such a one as no Man can be guilty of, without such a Reprobate Mind as puts him beyond all Possibility of Repentance. For to attribute that Divine Power by which our Saviour cast out Devils, to a Confederacy with wicked Spirits, which was the Case to which our Saviour refers, argues such an incurable Malice and obstinate Infidelity, that such Men deserve to be finally rejected by God, and to be given up to a Reprobate Mind. We cannot now blaspheme the Holy Ghost as these *Jews* did, because we see none of those Miracles which our Saviour wrought: But there is something that comes very near it; when Men with the utmost Contempt and Malice, blaspheme and ridicule the Person, Doctrine, and Miracles of our Saviour, all the Sacred Mysteries of our Religion; and burlesque the Holy Scriptures, which were written by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is seldom seen, that such Men ever prove Penitents, but have the visible Marks of Reprobation upon them. But whatever Danger Infidels may be in of this Condemnation, which they ought carefully to avoid; for they may be modest Infidels, and not blaspheme; yet it is certain, that no Believer

Believer can be guilty of this Unpardonable Sin; and all other Sins shall be forgiven to Penitent and Believing Sinners. And what more perfect Grace and Forgiveness can there be, than to forgive all? And what an Encouragement is this to all Sorts of Sinners, to repent and turn to God? How many or how great soever their Sins have been, Christ hath made an Expiation for them all, and has promised to forgive them all: Though we are grown old in Wickedness, if we repent and reform, the Day of Grace is not past with us; God will accept of our decrepit Years, and receive us into his Vineyard at the Eleventh Hour. But have a Care of delaying Repentance to a Dying Bed; when we may have all the Remorse of Repentance, but can't reform; when Repentance is Matter of Force, and the Terrors of Conscience which we feel, are more like the Beginnings of Hell in our Souls, than the Pangs of a new Birth. In a word, the Love of God in giving his Son for us, and the Love of Christ in giving himself for our Redemption, ought to be a powerful Obligation on us, to live to him who died for us; to consecrate our Youthful Strength and Vigor to his Service: But if we have been so foolish and wicked, as to waste the best Part of our Lives in the Service of our Lusts, let us return and repent at last, for there is Mercy for repenting Sinners; by and thro' Christ is preached unto us the Forgiveness of Sins.



S E R M O N X I.

Prayer in the Name of Christ.

JOHN xvi. part of ver. 23 and 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you.

Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

THIS our Saviour repeats in the 26th and 27th Verses: *In that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.* And there was great Reason for repeating this, and speaking very plain, because it was a new Form of Worship, which they were hitherto unacquainted with; as he tells them, *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; for the proper Time for that*

200 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

was not yet come : But after his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven, all their Prayers must be offered to God in the Name of Christ, which gave a new Form to Religion, and distinguished the Christian Worship from all other Forms of Worship. This is a Matter of such near Concernment, and so little considered in its true Nature and just Consequences, that I cannot do better than briefly to explain it to you, as a very proper Subject for our Meditation, now we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, and contemplate our Lord in his Advancement to the Right Hand of the Throne of God. And to this purpose I shall,

I. Enquire, What it is to ask in the Name of Christ, or to offer up all our Prayers to God in his Name.

II. Shew you, That this is the only Way now to have our Prayers heard and answered by God; and that God will certainly grant us all the Good Things which we pray for in the Name of Christ.

I. As for the *First*; to ask in Christ's Name, is to beg God to hear and answer all our Petitions for Christ's Sake; not for any *worthiness of our own*, but *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; for the *Merits and Mediation of our only Mediator and Advocate Jesus Christ*; for the *sake of his only Son Jesus Christ*

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 201

Christ our Lord; or such other equivalent Expressions, wherewith we always conclude our Prayers. But as often as we repeat these and such like Forms of Words, I doubt there are too many who never rightly considered the true Meaning and Importance of them; which makes it necessary to explain this in some few Particulars.

As 1st. To pray in the Name of Christ, is to beg of God all the Good Things we want, in a firm Belief of the Merits of Christ's Death, and the Power of his Intercession; That he hath purchased all Good Things for us, and is advanced to the Right Hand of God, to bestow on us whatever we ask in his Name; as he tells his Disciples, *John xiv. 13, 14. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* We must pray in Faith, if we would be heard; but the Christian Object of Faith in Prayer is, not merely the Natural Goodness of God, but the Merits and Mediation of Christ, that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which Christ hath sealed with his own Blood, and which he administers by his Power. St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, *That all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, Yea, and in him, Amen*; that is, they are all made to us in him, and accomplished by him, *2 Cor. i. 20.* So that he is now the only Medium of our Faith,
and

202 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

and Hope, and Trust in God, as he is our only Mediator ; and therefore *we must come unto God by him*, in a full Trust and Reliance on his Merits and Mediation.

We must ask all Blessings of God in such a Manner, and for such Reasons as he has promised to bestow such Blessings on us ; and therefore if all the Promises of God are made to us in Christ, and bestowed on us for his sake, we must ask them all in his Name. As to shew you this particularly.

God forgives the Sins of true Penitents, only for the sake of Christ, who hath made the Atonement, and sealed the Covenant of Grace and Pardon with his own Blood ; and therefore this is the Commission he gave his Apostles after his Resurrection from the Dead, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, Luke xxiv. 47. And this Remission of Sins is only to be had through Faith in his Name, or through Faith in his Blood ; *Rom. iii. 24. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.* And therefore we must ask the Forgiveness of our Sins only in the Name of Christ, and through Faith in his Blood ; that I cannot see what Title those Men have to the Forgiveness of Sin, who though they believe in Christ as a Divine Teacher, and the most excellent Prophet, and pray to God in his Name as a powerful Favourite ;

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 203

Favourite ; yet believe not one Word of the Expiation of his Death, and therefore cannot be justified through Faith in his Blood, nor pray to God in the Name of their Great High-Priest and Sacrifice, which is the true Notion of Praying to God in Christ's Name ; in Virtue of his Sacrifice and Sacerdotal Intercession ; without which, we pray for the Forgiveness of our Sins without a Promise.

Thus, next to the Forgiveness of our Sins, we daily want the Supplies of God's Grace and Holy Spirit, to renew and sanctify our Natures, to mortify our Lusts, to confirm our Faith in all difficult Trials, and to make us fruitful in all Good Works : Now this is to be had only in Christ, through Faith in him ; and therefore we must ask it all in Christ's Name. It is he alone, that *baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*, who hath promised, That *whosoever believeth in him, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters*, John vii. 38. It is he, who when he left this World, sent his Spirit to dwell in his Church, to animate his mystical Body, and every living Member of it. All supernatural Grace is *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and the Promises of supernatural Grace are contained only in that Covenant which is sealed with his Blood ; our Regeneration and new Birth, is our being *baptized into his death : He is that bread of life, which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world* : To feed on him, is the constant Support

204 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

Support of our Spiritual Life; for *his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.* He is the Spiritual Vine, we the Branches; and from him we derive all the Influences of Spiritual Life, to bring forth Fruits unto Eternal Life: And if all Divine Grace be derived from him, we must ask it in his Name.

The End and Completion of our Hope is Eternal Life, and that *is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23. God hath given unto us eternal life, but this life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11.* As our Saviour himself tells us, *That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. And, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, tho' he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die, John xi. 25, 26.* With many other Expressions to the same purpose. So that Pardon of Sin, and Supernatural Grace, and Eternal Life, are all the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and through him only; and therefore we must ask them of God only in his Name, for we can have no other Title to them, but his Merits and Mediation, through Faith in his Blood.

As for all Temporal Blessings, these we must ask also in the Name of Christ. For
though

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 205

though God doth Good to the Evil and to the Good, and causeth his Sun to shine, and the Rain to fall upon the Just and upon the Unjust; and as St. Paul tells the Men of *Lystra*, even in those Times, when *God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; yet he left not himself without a witness, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*, Acts xiv. 16, 17. yet I say, it is a very different thing to live upon the undistinguished Goodness of God, and to have a Covenant Right to God's Care and Protection, and constant Provision for us, even in this World. Now we have no Promise of these Temporal Good Things, but only in and through Christ; but he hath promised, *That if we seek first the kingdom of God; that is, the Kingdom of Christ, which is the Kingdom of God on Earth; if we become good Christians, believe in Christ, and obey his Laws; then all these things, Food and Raiment, and all other Necessaries of Life, shall be added unto us*, Matth. vi. 33. And St. Paul tells us, *That Godliness, that is, the sincere Profession and Practice of Christianity, hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. And that God's Love in giving his Son for us, is Reason enough to depend on him for all other Things: *For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Rom.

206 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

Rom. viii. 32. Christ hath now all Power committed to him, both in Heaven and in Earth, and he governs this lower World in Subserviency to the great Ends of his Spiritual Kingdom, and allots our particular Portions and Conditions in this World, as we are best able to bear it, as will best secure our Eternal Happiness, and advance our Progress in all Christian Graces and Virtues. This gives us all possible Security, that we shall want nothing that is good for us, and (which is as considerable as that) that all things shall work together for our good. This is a much happier State than to be Rich and Great at all Adventures; and if we would have God chuse for us (which every Wise and Good Man would above all things in the World make his Choice) we must pray for all Temporal, as well as Spiritual Good Things, in the Name and Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2dly. To ask in the Name of Christ, is to recommend ourselves and our Petitions to God, only upon this Account, that we are the Disciples of Christ. *We are accepted in the beloved*: It is, as I have already shewn, through His Merits and Mediation alone, that God forgives our Sins, bestows on us the Influences of his Grace in this World, and Eternal Life in the next; and it is only our Relation to Christ that gives us a Title to the Purchase of his Death, and the Blessings of his Intercession; and therefore this is our
only

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 207

only Plea at the Throne of Grace, That we belong to Christ, that we are his Disciples, and the Members of his Body, which entitles us to the Purchase of his Blood.

Faith, and Repentance, and New Obedience, are the necessary Conditions of our Discipleship. Christ will own none for his, but those who believe in him, and obey him: But nothing of this is to be pleaded at the Throne of Grace, any otherwise than as the Evidences of our Discipleship; the Name of Christ, our Relation to him, is our only Plea; not the Merit of Faith, or Repentance, or Obedience, which have no other Merit but what the Merits of Christ give them.

As the Covenant of Grace was purchased and sealed with the Blood of Christ, so this Covenant was made with Christ, for all whom he would own to be his Members and sincere Disciples; and therefore he is made the Judge both of the Quick and of the Dead; and his Judgment consists in Judging who are his: He separates the Sheep from the Goats, and those whom he owns, God owns, and rewards with Eternal Life; and whom he rejects, God rejects, and condemns to be punished with the Devil and his Angels. Thus our Saviour expresses the final Damnation of Bad Men, by his denying them, and being ashamed of them. *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven, Matth. x. 33.* And who-
soever

208 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy Angels; that is, when he comes to Judgment, Luke ix. 26. This shuts all Infidels and Impenitent Sinners out of Heaven, that Christ disowns them, *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matth. vii. 23. and then the Justice of God will seize them, and render to them according to their Evil Works. But the sincere Disciples of Christ, whom he will own the Last Day before his Father, and the Holy Angels, though they cannot challenge Heaven as the Merit of their Works, yet they shall be saved by his Name, and inherit that Glory and Immortality, which he hath purchased for his Church. And thus we must Pray to God, as we must finally be Saved, only in the Name of Christ; and unless we approve ourselves to be the Sincere Disciples of Christ, and the Living Members of his Body, God will no more hear us when we Pray in the Name of Christ, than we shall be finally Saved by his Name. This our Saviour signifies, in that Assurance he gives his Disciples, that God will hear them, if they Pray in his Name; *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God*: That is, because ye belong to me: Which, by the way, if well considered, would easily reconcile

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 209

cile that warm Dispute about Faith and Works in our Justification. God accepts and rewards us, that is, Justifies us for the sake of Christ, as his Disciples, not for the Merit either of Faith or Works; but Christ owns none for his Disciples, but such Believers as obey his Laws, and do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven; and therefore none but such shall be Justified by God.

3dly. To ask in the Name of Christ, is to offer up all our Prayers and Petitions to God by Christ our Great High-Priest. Such Vile Miserable Sinners as we are, must not approach the Throne of Grace without a Powerful and Meritorious High-Priest to offer up our Prayers to God. This is the Encouragement the Apostle gives us in our Prayers, *Seeing then that we have a great high-priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession to the end; for we have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,* Heb. iv. 16, 17, 18. Under the Law, the Prayers of the Saints were typified by Incense, which was offered by the Priest together with the Sacrifice; and thus our Great High-Priest alone, who has made the Atonement for us by his Blood, must offer up our Prayers to
P God,

210 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

God in Virtue of his own Blood. If we must ask the Forgiveness of our Sins only in the Name of Christ, and in Virtue of his Sacrifice, none but our High-Priest can offer our Prayers to God, for none else can unite our Prayers and his Sacrifice together.

Those who pray to God in the Name of any Creature, though the greatest Saints and Angels, who yet never died for them, nor made any Atonement for their Sins, pray to God without a Priest and a Sacrifice, and such Prayers will not be received. The Intercession God will accept, is not the Intercession of a mere Favourite, but of a Priest; and the Intercession of a Priest consists, in offering up our Prayers in Virtue of his own Sacrifice: And therefore to pray in the Name of Christ, is to offer up all our Prayers to God by him, from whom only our Prayers will be accepted. And this teaches us, how necessary it is for us to pray to God: For Christ does not intercede for us, unless we pray for ourselves; he cannot offer our Prayers to God, if we make no Prayers for him to offer. To expect that Christ should intercede for us, when we never pray for ourselves, is not to trust in him as our Mediator; for the Office of a Mediator is not to pray for us, whether we pray or no, but to offer up our Prayers; and when we humbly and heartily pray, then our Lord offers up our Prayers to his Father, and gives Virtue and
Accep-

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 211

Acceptation to them. This may suffice for the Explication of the First Thing proposed, what it is to ask in the Name of Christ.

II. This Asking in the Name of Christ, is now the only way to have our Prayers heard and answered by God; and that God will certainly grant us all Good Things which we pray for in the Name of Christ. Now here are two distinct Parts. *First*, That God will hear us upon no other Terms than our Asking in Christ's Name. And *Secondly*, That he will grant what we ask in Christ's Name.

It is very necessary, especially in such an Age as this, carefully to consider the First, when so many Men deceive themselves, that if they Repent of their Sins, and Amend their Lives, they need no Name to pray in; a Good God will forgive their Sins, and grant all they pray for, without a Priest, and Sacrifice, and Mediator; there is nothing of all this in Natural Religion, and they doubt not but that is a safe Way to Salvation; and therefore they despise all Revelation, and all the Talk of the Sacrifice, and Priesthood, and Mediation of Christ, as a mere Fable, and the Invention of Priests.

Natural Religion is a very Charming Word, and carries great Authority in its Name; but these Men little consider what the true State of Nature is; for pure Natural Religion is fitted only to the Original State of Nature, and will fit no other State. This is a self-

212 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

evident Proposition, That Natural Religion is that Religion which belongs to the true State of Nature; and therefore cannot be the only Religion of Man, when he is fallen from the true Original State of Nature.

Now, whether we believe the History of *Moses* or not, if we believe that God made Man, we must believe that he made Man upright, that Man came pure, innocent, and holy out of the Hand of God: Innocence and Holiness then was the Original State of Nature, and consequently Natural Religion is the Religion of Innocence, such a Worship as innocent Man owes his Maker, and as God will accept of from an innocent and holy Man; which principally consists in owning him to be the Maker of the World, and our Great Creator; in giving him the Glory of all his Works; in a thankful Acknowledgment of his Goodness; in professing our Dependence on him, and Submission to him in all things, and praying for the Continuance of his Favour to us.

This, I say, is Natural Religion in a State of Innocence; and there can be no other Notion of pure Natural Religion, because there is no other true State of Nature: For by Sin Man fell from the Original State of Nature, as well as from the Favour of God; and then mere Natural Religion can be no more the only Religion of a Sinner, than Sin is the Original State of Nature.

I grant

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 213

I grant, that Reason itself, without Revelation, (which in that Sense may be called Natural Reason) exacts some new Duties from Sinners; as, To be sorry for their Sins, to beg God's Pardon for them, and to reform them: But these are not the Duties of Natural Religion; that is, do not immediately result from Nature, but are consequential Obligations, which Sin, not Nature, lays upon us; and therefore the Acceptance of all this cannot be owing to the Religion of Nature, of which it is no Part, nor to the mere Natural Goodness of our Maker, which is dispensed only according to the Rules and Measures of Nature, or the natural Covenant, which is confined to innocent Creatures, and does not extend to Sinners.

Some Men think, that natural Reason makes it as essential to the Divine Goodness to forgive a Penitent, as it makes it a necessary Duty for Sinners to repent; and therefore make Repentance a Duty, and the Forgiveness of Sins an Article of Natural Religion: Whereas it is certain, Natural Religion exacts an unfinning Obedience, and therefore makes no Allowances for Repentance; and that Natural Relation which God has to his Creatures, as their Maker and Sovereign Lord, extends his Goodness no farther than to innocent Creatures, who preserve the Uprightness and Integrity of their Nature: And how good soever God is, and how much soever it be the

214 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

Property of Goodness to forgive, we must expect no more from God, than according to the Terms of that Covenant under which we are ; and therefore by the Natural Covenant, or Natural Religion, Sinners have no Right to the Forgiveness of Sins, for that is a Covenant of Obedience, not of Pardon.

Mankind had Reason to hope, that a good God would forgive the Sins of true Penitents ; but then it must be under some other Character and Relation, than merely as our Creator and Sovereign Lord ; for tho' this secures innocent and obedient Creatures of all that Natural Happiness they were made for, yet Grace and Mercy for Sinners is not a Natural Right, which we can challenge from the Goodness of our Maker ; and therefore is no Promise of Natural Religion, which reaches no further than the Rights of Nature.

There is no need to dispute, Whether a good God can forgive Sin ; for Infinite Goodness, which is the Goodness of God, must comprehend all Kinds, Degrees, and Instances of Goodness ; and forgiving Goodness is Goodness, and therefore essential to the Divine Goodness : But the single Question is, Under what Notion this Forgiving-Goodness belongs to God, and by what Rules it is administered ? For the different kinds of Goodness, though they all belong to the Goodness of God, yet do not all belong to the same Administration.

Now

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 215

Now all the several Acts of the Divine Goodness may be reduced to two general Heads, *viz.* Creation and Redemption.

Creating-Goodness does not only signify giving Being to Creatures, but a happy Being, according to the different Capacities of their Natures; and this, we may modestly say, gives them a Natural Right to that Happiness their Natures were made for, while they continue such Creatures as God made them: For God's giving them such Natures, is a kind of Natural Contract and Covenant with Creatures for a Natural Happiness, while they observe the Laws of their Nature, and live as such Creatures ought to live; and if God made them improvable Creatures, as he made Man, every Improvement they make entitles them to such new Degrees of Happiness in the Divine Favour, as answers to such Improvements: Thus far Natural Religion and the Natural Covenant reaches, to entitle us to the Favour of God, and all the Happiness of our Natures, in the Observance of the Laws and Religion of Nature: But now it is manifest, that this Natural Creating-Goodness of God extends only to innocent Creatures; for the Natural Obligation on God to do good to them, is, that he made them; and the Natural Right they have to the Goodness of God, is that they are such Creatures as God made them; but Sin dissolves this Obligation, and forfeits this Right; for a de-

216 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

generate Apostate Nature is not the Object of Natural Goodness, but of Natural Justice, which is as essential to God as Goodness is; and therefore whatever Goodness God extends to Sinners, is not owing to the Natural Covenant, nor consequently to Natural Religion, but to a superabundant Goodness in God, which hath no Cause but itself; and therefore is absolutely at Liberty to dispense Grace and Mercy to Sinners upon what Terms he pleases; and this is the Reason and Foundation of the Covenant of Grace, and of instituted Religion, to prescribe the Means and Conditions of our Recovery, which belongs not to Creating but Redeeming Goodness: for that is the true Name of God's Goodness to Sinners, which delivers them from the just Punishment of their Sins, restores them to the Favour of God, and a forfeited Happiness. This, Sinners have no Natural Right to, and therefore must owe it to a voluntary Covenant of Grace and Mercy: There is such a Goodness in God, as can and will forgive Sins, and save Sinners; and Natural Reason may satisfy us, that there is such a Forgiving Goodness in God; but then this is not the mere Goodness of a Maker, but of a Redeemer; is no Part of the Natural Covenant, but of a Covenant of Grace; that could we never so demonstratively prove, that God will forgive true Penitents, this does not prove, that Sinners shall be saved by mere
Natural

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 217

Natural Religion, which admits of no Repentance, promises no Pardon, has no Priest nor Sacrifice; but if it proves any thing, it proves that God will enter into a new Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Sinners; for Sinners cannot be saved by Nature, but by Grace; as to explain this by a parallel Instance.

A Father is under a Natural Obligation to be kind to a virtuous and dutiful Son; this is founded in Nature, and is a kind of natural Covenant; which gives an obedient Son as natural a Right to the Love and Care of his Father, as the Father has to the Duty of the Son: But Disobedience and Rebellion forfeits the Rights of this Natural Relation; and though Natural Affection may still move a kind and compassionate Father to be merciful to a repenting Rebel and Prodigal, this is all Grace and Favour, not a natural Right; and therefore the kindest Father may, and a wise Father will, make new Terms with his Rebel and Prodigal; not see him, nor accept his Submission, without powerful Intercessions, and great Securities of his good Behaviour; and will first put him into a State of Trial and Discipline, before he receives him to Favour. But then if this Rebel and Prodigal have not only provoked his Father, and forfeited his Natural Right to his Paternal Care and Kindness, but has sold himself into Slavery, has forfeited his Life, spent his Inheritance,

218 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

heritance, mere Pardon and Forgiveness will not save such a Prodigal; but there must be a Ransom paid for his Liberty, his Life must be redeemed, and a new Inheritance must be purchased for him, or his Father's Pardon will do him no good: A very kind Father may do all this, but it is not a Debt of Nature, but pure Grace; and as the Prodigal has no Natural Claim to this, so he can have no Natural Assurance that his Father will do it, till he sees him do it, or has his Promise to do it: His mere returning to his Natural Duty will not purchase his Liberty, his Life, and his lost Inheritance; his Father must make a new Purchase of this, and enter into new Contracts and Covenants, quite different from that natural Covenant between Father and Son.

This may give us some Notion of the difference between a Natural Covenant, and the Covenant of Redemption; between the Religion of innocent and obedient Man, and the Religion of a Sinner: The Religion of Nature in the first Case will secure to us the Natural Goodness of our Maker, and all the Rights, and Privileges, and Happiness of innocent Nature; but a Sinner, who has provoked his Maker, forfeited Immortality and an earthly Paradise, corrupted his Nature, and made himself a Slave to vile Affections, can never by the mere Powers of Nature redeem himself from Death, recover the Up-

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 219

rightness and Integrity of Nature, merit the Forgiveness of his Sins, and purchase a new Right to Immortal Life, and therefore cannot be saved by Natural Religion, or the Natural Covenant. A good God in all pitiable Cases is inclined to shew Mercy to Sinners, as a kind Father is to have Compassion on a Prodigal; but if he does, it is by a new Covenant, and new Promises, founded in the Right of Redemption, and qualified by what Terms and Conditions he pleases; which we cannot learn from Nature, nor know any more of, than what God thinks fit to reveal. This may satisfy us, how little Reason there is to talk of Natural Religion to Sinners, who have forfeited all the Rights of Nature, and must owe their Recovery and Salvation to the Merits of a Redeemer, and the free Grace and Goodness of God; and the Knowledge and Assurance of this, to the Promulgation of a new Covenant, and the Institution of such a Religion, as prescribes the 'Means of our Recovery, and the gracious Terms and Conditions of Pardon and Immortal Life. For tho' God be infinitely good, and we know that forgiving Goodness is a Branch of Infinite Goodness, yet without an express Covenant and Promise we cannot tell whether he will forgive us, or upon what Terms or for what Reasons he will forgive; for tho' the Scripture were wholly silent in this Matter,

we

220 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

we have no Reason to believe, that a good God will forgive all, or will forgive always; no more than a good Man will do so: This misled *Origen*, that he ventured to reason about God's Forgiving-Goodness, beyond any Covenant or Promise; which betrayed him into that Opinion, so directly contrary to the Christian Faith, that both Devils and damned Men should be finally saved, or at least admitted to a new State of Trial. And yet I confess I know no Arguments, without a Promise and Covenant, to prove that God will forgive Sinners, which will not extend to the final Forgiveness of the Damned, whether Men or Devils, upon the Supposition of their Repentance; and yet it is the hardest thing in the World to imagine, that either Men or Devils, who suffer the Vengeance of God, should harden themselves against Repentance, had they any Hopes, that Repentance would save them: And if we can reason no farther from the Natural Notions of God's Goodness, than the Covenant, under which we are, extends, there is an end of Natural Religion, as to the Salvation of Sinners; for the State of Nature is a Covenant of Works, not of Grace.

This, I hope, may satisfy you, that Natural Religion, or the Natural Covenant, can give no Security to Sinners, that God will hear and answer their Prayers: We must
owe

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 221

owe this to a new Covenant of Grace ; and we know of no other, but the Gospel Covenant, of which Christ is the only Mediator ; and we are as sure that God will hear all those Prayers which we offer up in the Name, and Merits, and Mediation of Christ, as we are of the Truth of the Gospel. For our Saviour hath not only expressly promised this, but the whole Nature and Administration of the Gospel Covenant proves it. If Christ have made Atonement and Expiation for our Sins ; if we are justified thro' Faith in his Blood ; if he be ascended up into Heaven, as our great High-Priest, and sits at the Right Hand of God, powerfully to intercede for us ; as we must ask all in Christ's Name, so we shall as certainly be heard and answered, as he sits at the Right Hand of God.

Indeed under the Law, all those Rites which gave Virtue and Efficacy to their Prayers, were Types of Christ, and signified and prefigured our Acceptance in him. Sacrifice from the Beginning was a Rite of Prayer, and this was a Type of the great Sacrifice of the Cross, which was prefigured by all the various Sacrifices of the Law. The Priests, who offered these Sacrifices, and made the Atonement, especially the High-Priest, who entered once a Year into the Holy of Holies, were Types of our
great

222 *Prayer in the Name of Christ.*

great High-Priest, who entered into Heaven, the true Holy Place, with his own Blood, there to offer up the Incense of our Prayers, and to make Intercession for us, as the Levitical Priests did in the earthly Tabernacle. There was but one Temple, which was God's House, where he dwelt, and whither they were to bring all their Sacrifices, and to direct all their Prayers; and this was a Type of Christ, in whom the God-head dwells bodily, who answers to all the mystical Parts of the Temple, is our Propitiatory and Mercy-seat, where we must offer up all our Prayers to God. So that we have as great Assurance, that God will hear and answer all those Prayers, which we offer to him in the Name of Christ, as we have of the Truth both of the Jewish and Christian Religion. And those who do not like this, must trust to their Natural Reason, and Natural Religion, which can give them no Assurance at all, that God will hear them.

To conclude: Let us look after our Lord to Heaven, and see the Glory and Power to which he is advanced, how he sits at the Right Hand of God, swaying the Sceptre of Heaven and Earth, and then doubt if we can, whether God will grant us what we ask in his Name. This is the Christian Triumph on Earth, that we have such a powerful Intercessor

Prayer in the Name of Christ. 223

tercessor in Heaven; the Completion of our Happiness will be, when we shall have no further need of praying, but shall be received into his Presence, to be where he is, and to behold his Glory.

*Which God of his infinite Mercy grant,
through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom
with the Father, and the Holy Spirit,
be all Honour, Glory and Power, now
and for ever. Amen.*

S E R-

8

S

T

Tha

C

n

J

v

t

T

Wor

his

St. A

here

verts

the M

cam

ff,

V



S E R M O N XII.

The State of the Heathens without
Christ.

E P H E S I A N S ii. 12.

*That at that time ye were without
Christ, being aliens from the com-
monwealth of Israel, and strangers
from the covenants of promise, ha-
ving no hope, and without God in
the world.*

TH E S E Words are a Description of
the miserable State of the Heathen
World before the appearing of Christ, and
his preaching the Gospel to them, which
St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, both
here and elsewhere minds his Gentile Con-
verts of, the more deeply to affect them with
the Love of God, in sending a Saviour, who
came to preach *Peace to them who were afar
off*, Ver. 17. And therefore we Gentiles are

VOL. II.

Q

very

226 *The State of the Heathens*

very nearly concerned in this; for tho' when Mankind had corrupted their Ways, and universally inclined to Idolatry, God chose *Abraham* and his Posterity for his peculiar People, to preserve the Knowledge and the Worship of the One Supreme God in the World, yet he designed the Appearance of Christ to be a more universal Blessing; he promised *Abraham* that in his Seed, that is in *Christ*, all the nations in the earth should be blessed; and therefore Christ is called the desire of all nations, *A light to lighten the Gentiles, The day-spring from on high to visit us, To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; that is, the Heathen World. This was a great Secret to the *Jews* even in the Apostles Days, till God revealed this Mystery to *St. Peter* in a Vision, when he sent him to *Cornelius*. And the *Jews* were greatly scandalized at this, that the Gentiles were received into the Communion of the Christian Church, without being incorporated into the Body of *Israel* by Circumcision, which occasioned that great Dispute among the Jewish Christians, about the necessity of circumcising the Gentile Converts, and their Obligation to observe the Law of *Moses* together with the Faith of Christ. They allowed, that all the World might become *Jews*, and be united to the Body of *Israel* by Circumcision; but could not endure to think, that Circumcision and the Law of *Moses* should be abrogated by Christ,

Christ, and the Gentiles admitted to partake of all the Blessings of the Messiah, without Circumcision or observing the Law. This is the occasion of most of those Disputes which St. *Paul* had with the *Jews*, and the principal Subject of the Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, and frequently occurs in his other Epistles, where he so largely proves, that we are not justified by Circumcision or the Works of the Law, but by Faith in Christ; that in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature, that Faith which worketh by Love, and Obedience to the Commandments of God. This is the Privilege which we Gentiles are now admitted to, and that we may know how to value it, and how to use it, let us consider what the State of the Hea-then World was, before Christ's Appearance in the Flesh to preach the Gospel; which the Apostle describes in my Text, and the Explication and Improvement of which, is what at present I intend.

First, then, the Apostle tells them, that at that Time they were *without Christ*. But what is the Meaning of this? Was not all the World, *Jews* as well as Gentiles, without Christ, before he came in the Flesh, and manifested himself to *Israel*? for the Apostle does not here speak only of those Gentile Converts, who lived since the appearing of Christ, but of the general State of the Pagan

228 *The State of the Heathens*

World, and makes their being without Christ, the first and principal Part of their deplorable and hopeless Condition. *Grotius* tells us, that the Reason why the Gentiles are said to be without Christ, is, because the Promise of the Messiah was never made to them, but only to the *Jews*; so that they knew nothing of that Messiah and Saviour whom God had promised to send into the World. This is true, but not the whole Truth; for unless they were deprived of some inestimable Privileges and Benefits, which Christ at that Time before his Appearance in the World bestowed upon the *Jews*, who were his peculiar People, the bare not knowing the Promise of the Messiah, would not have rendered their Condition so desperate and hopeless; but to be without Christ, or out of Christ, divided and separated from him, signifies to have no Relation to him, no Interest in him, nor in those Privileges and Blessings, which the *Jews*, who were his peculiar People, received from him before his personal Appearance in the World.

We must think very meanly of the Jewish State, and of the Wisdom of God in it, if we think it only concerned this present Life. It was indeed a typical State, but it typified spiritual Blessings, and so typified them, as to give the sincere Worshipers of God, who observed his Laws and Statutes, and Ordinances, a Right to those spiritual Blessings

which they were Types of; otherwise they were very insignificant Types to all the *Jews*, the peculiar People of God, till Christ came in the Flesh: But this *Messias*, of whose coming in the Flesh the Prophets foretold, was the Eternal Son of God, and had chosen *Israel* for his peculiar People; as St. *John* assures us, he came to his own chosen and peculiar People, but his own received him not. It was Christ that had the Care and Government of them in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and in all their Travels thro' the Wilderness. And therefore St. *Paul* tells us, they tempted Christ in the Wilderness, 1 Cor. x. 9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted him, and were destroyed of serpents.* And therefore in the Beginning of that Chapter he tells us, that they partook in the same Sacraments with us: *Moreover, Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; that is, Manna from Heaven, which Christ tell us was a Type of himself; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: (for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ,)* 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 3, 4. Thus their Sacrifices were all typical of the great Sacrifice of Christ; and thus the Blood of Bulls and of Goats were of no value in themselves to take

230 *The State of the Heathens*

away Sin; yet they were accepted for all good Men, in Virtue of that Sacrifice, which was represented by them, and which Christ himself would in due Time offer for them.

The Land of *Canaan* was but a temporal Inheritance, but it was a Type of Heaven; and upon the same Terms that any Man had a Fœderal and Covenant Right to live happily in *Canaan*, he should live in Heaven: For tho' all the natural Posterity of *Abraham* had their Inheritance in *Canaan*, yet according to the strict Terms and Conditions of that Covenant, they had no longer any Right even to the temporal Blessings of *Canaan*, than while they observed the Laws and Statutes of God; and all such Men had by the same Covenant a Right to Heaven; as we may learn from the xvth Psalm, *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* and gives such a Character of these Men, as will entitle them to Heaven, the true Tabernacle and holy Hill, which was certainly the principal Design of this Psalm; *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury,*

nor

nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things, shall never be moved. This is such a Character as all Men allow belongs to the heavenly, not the earthly *Canaan*, which had few such Inhabitants in it.

This was the State of the *Jews* before the Appearance of Christ in the Flesh; but this was not the State of the Gentiles. They were without Christ, and thereupon had no Title to the Expiation of their Sins by his Sacrifice, nor to the Promise of the heavenly *Canaan*. Those who please may dispute the Point, how God will deal with the Heathen World; I have nothing to say of it, but that they were without Christ. It is certain, they had some Notion of the Necessity of making an Atonement for the Expiation of their Sins, and therefore they offered Sacrifices to their Gods, but not to the One Supreme God, but to Devils. And such Sacrifices could have no Relation to the Sacrifice of Christ, and therefore could make no Expiation nor Atonement for Sin, but were a new Provocation, as all Acts of Idolatry are. And then how much soever they were persuaded of a future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, they could have no Right to a Christian Immortality. To be thus without Christ, is to be out of a State of Salvation, for all that shall be saved from the Beginning of the World, must be saved by Christ, otherwise, why should the Apostle represent this as so

232 *The State of the Heathens*

deplorable a State, to be without Christ, before Christ appeared in the Flesh, when in this Sense all the World was as much without Christ as they. And that this is the Apostle's meaning, appears from those other Particulars which he here adds, which are only the Proof or Explication of this.

II. He tells them therefore, in the next Place, that they *were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*; which proves them to be without Christ; [that is, they had no Relation to the Body of *Israel*, the Seed and Posterity of *Abraham*, to whom the Promise of the Messias was made. For the understanding of which, we must observe, that the first Promise of Christ was made to *Adam* in Paradise, immediately after his Fall, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpents head*, which gave all Mankind a Right to this Salvation by Christ. But then when the World declined to Idolatry, God renewed his Promise more expressly to *Abraham*, entered into Covenant with him and his Seed, and confined the Promises, and the Blessings of the Messias, to him and his Seed. Not merely to his carnal Seed, who descended from him by carnal Generation, but to all the spiritual Seed, the Children of *Abraham* by Faith: For in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed. But still this Blessing must come from the Seed of *Abraham*,

ham, and all Men must be entitled to these Blessings of *Abraham*, either by natural Descent, or by Profelyteism; and there were two sorts of Profelytes, the Profelytes of Righteousness, who were incorporated into the Body of *Israel* by Circumcision, and undertook the Observance of the whole Law; and these had as much Right to the Blessings and Promises of *Abraham*, as *Jews* by Birth. But besides these, there were those whom they called the Profelytes of the Gate; that is, those who renounced Idolatry, and worshiped the One Supreme God, the God of *Israel*. And these Persons were allowed by God himself to live in *Canaan*, and to converse with his People tho' they were not circumcised, they were admitted to worship God in the outward Court of the Temple, which was therefore called the Court of the Gentiles. And this gave them some Relation to the Body of *Israel*, and to the Temple itself, which they could not have had, without an Interest in the Promise of the Messias; and such Gentiles were not without Christ. And therefore the Apostle does not lay the Proof of their being without Christ, upon their not being *Israelites*, their not being incorporated into the Body of *Israel*, neither by Birth nor Profelyteism, but upon their being Aliens, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῇ πολιτείᾳ τῆς Ἰσραήλ, banished, secluded, shut out from the Body of *Israel*. Such as by the Law of
God

234 *The State of the Heathens*

God ought to have no Conversation with *Israel*, not so much as to live amongst them, which no Idolaters were suffered to do, by the Divine Law; which was a certain Proof, that they had no Right to the Blessings of the Messias. That the Gentiles were received into the Jewish Church and Body of *Israel* by Circumcision, is a Proof that the Blessings of the Messias were not confined to natural *Jews*, for then the Gentiles had been absolutely incapable of being admitted, even by Circumcision itself, into the Church, which was founded wholly on the Covenant and Promise of the Messias, and that Promise only made to the Seed of *Abraham*. And that those Gentiles who renounced Idolatry, and worshiped the God of *Israel*, without being circumcised, were allowed by God himself to live within the Confines of his Church, and to converse with his own People, and to worship in the Temple, proves also, that these uncircumcised Gentiles had some Title to the Blessings of the Messias. And by the same Reason, to be so perfectly shut out from the Body and Conversation of *Israel*, as Heathen Idolaters were, proves, that they had no Right to the Messias, but were absolutely without the Covenant of Grace.

III. The necessary Consequence of this the Apostle tells them, that they were Strangers
to

to the Covenant of Promise; had no Right to God's Covenant, nor to the Blessings and Promises of it, no more than Strangers and Foreigners had to the Privileges and Immunities of Free-born Subjects. Thus the Apostle expounds it in the 19th Verse, where he takes Notice of the blessed Change of their Condition, by their embracing the Faith of Christ; *Therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* For the Covenants and the Promises are all made in Christ, and are all fulfilled in him. *In him all the promises of God are Yea, and in him, Amen.* And all these Promises are confined to the Church, to the spiritual, and not merely to the carnal Seed and Posterity of *Abraham*, as I have already explained it. And therefore to be without Christ, and to be Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Israel*, is to be Strangers to the Covenant of Promise. Such Men have no Covenant, no Promise to rely on, neither for this World, nor the next. For God has made no other Covenant with Mankind, only in and thro' Christ: So that these Men have no Promise of Forgiveness of Sins and immortal Life; for this is God's Covenant with Mankind in Christ. Under the Law Forgiveness of Sins was annexed to the Atonement and Expiation of Sacrifices, which were the Types of the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, who by his

236 *The State of the Heathens*

his own Blood has entered into the Holy of Holies, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. And the Gospel-Covenant accordingly promises Forgiveness of Sins only thro' Faith in the Blood of Christ. The Land of *Canaan*, was a known Type of Heaven; especially Mount *Sion* and the holy Hill; and the Promise of a long Life in *Canaan*, the Land of Promise, was a Type of immortal Life in Heaven; and those, who had no Right to live in *Canaan*, who were Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Israel*, had no Covenant-right to immortal Life: And we know the Promises of the Resurrection and immortal Life in the Gospel Covenant, are only made in the Name of Christ, who shall raise us from the Dead, and change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like to his own most glorious Body. And if Infidels can find any other Covenant or Promise of the Forgiveness of Sins and immortal Life besides this, they may take the Comfort of it: But to be without a Covenant and Promise in Matters of such infinite Concernment is,

IV. A very hopeless State, as the Apostle here adds. Some refer this to the Belief and Hope of a future State and immortal Life, which they had no firm and stedfast Persuasion of. But tho' their Knowledge of a future State was very dark and imperfect, when com-

compared to the Gospel-Revelation ; yet those Heathen Idolaters did generally believe a Life after Death, that they cannot upon this account be said to be wholly without Hope. But this being without Hope refers to their being Strangers to the Covenant of Promise ; that they had no Promise of the Forgiveness of their Sins, and immortal Life ; and therefore no sure and stedfast Foundation for their Hope. For the only sure Foundation for Hope, in such Matters as wholly depend upon the Free-Grace and Mercy of God, is a Covenant and Promise. When God declares what he will do for us, as that he will forgive our Sins for Christ's sake, and raise us from the Dead, and bestow immortal Life on us, this we may securely rely on. No Man that believes that God has promised this, will ever question, whether he either can or will perform it. But how shall we know this without a Promise ? At least, what can give us such a Security as a Promise does ? We cannot have a direct and intuitive Knowledge of God ; but must see him in his Works or his Word. His Works are either Creation or Providence ; the first acquaints us with the Greatness, Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the Maker of all Things, his Eternal Power and Godhead, as *St. Paul* speaks : But this does not acquaint us, how God will govern the World, and govern Mankind,
much

238 *The State of the Heathens*

much less, how he will deal with Sinners. And the Providence of God is a mighty Mystery, especially what concerns the State of Religion, which makes St. Paul break forth into that Transport of Wonder and Devotion: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?* Romans xi. 33, 34. How uncertain are all our Reasons from the naked Contemplation of the Divine Nature, or of his Works? And what different Conclusions do Men draw from them? That all wise and considering Men must desire some better Assurance of the Forgiveness of their Sins, and immortal Life, than merely such Natural and Moral Arguments will afford. And yet those Men can have no better, who have no Covenant and Promise, which is the miserable Condition of those, who either know not Christ, or reject him, or have no Interest in him.

V. To compleat all, the Apostle adds, that they were "Αθεοι ἐν κόσμῳ, Atheists in the World, for so the Word signifies, but is very judiciously rendered by our Translators, *without God in the World*. For Atheists they were not in the proper Notion of Atheists,

ists, as that signifies those who deny the Being of God ; for they were so far from that, that they worshiped a great many Gods, that they worshiped any Thing for a God, rather than have none : And therefore some think they were called Atheists, because among all their Gods they did not worship the true God, and therefore were without God, tho' they worshiped a great many Evil Spirits for God. But there is not any one Instance, that I know of, to be given of this Signification of the Name *Atheist* : But *Ἀθεοι* does as properly signify those that are *without God*, as those that deny the Being of God ; and Men may be without God, who own his Being, as those are, who are not in Covenant with God, who have no Communication with him, no Hope or Expectation from him ; which was the Case of the Heathen Idolaters in my Text. For our Apostle having taken Notice how hopeless their State was, with respect to the other World, *as being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise*, he observes in these last Words, how hopeless their State was, with respect to this World also, that they lived in this World like Men that had no God to take Care of them : For all the Promises for this Life as well as for the next, are made to us only in Christ ; and therefore those that
are

240 *The State of the Heathens*

are without Christ, have no God by Covenant and Promise to take Care of them. They are at the Mercy of those Evil Spirits, which they worship. For whatever Care God does take of them, as St. *Paul* tells us in those Times of Pagan Idolatry, *He left not himself without a witness, giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*, yet this was more than they had any Promise of; and therefore there was no sure Foundation of Support and Comfort under all the Changes and Vicissitudes of Fortune: Whereas Christians are assured, that whatever their Condition be, adverse or prosperous, *all things shall work together for their good*. This makes a vast difference betwixt Heathens and Christians, not always in their external Fortune, but in their Peace, Security, and Satisfaction of Mind. Good Men, who know they have a God in Covenant to take Care of them, are easy and secure in all Conditions, as knowing, that the worst that can come, will end well; while bad Men are the Sport of Fortune, and if they understood their own Condition, could never be easy, nor think themselves safe. I have often wondered at Atheists, who can be contented to live in this World without a God to take Care of them. But that which makes this easy to them, is, that they flatter themselves, that they shall have no
God

God to judge them neither, and they had rather take their Fortune in this World, than be judged in the next. But to believe that there is a God, and not to be in Covenant with him, to have no Promise of the Blessings of this Life or of the next, is a much worse State. For such Men have a God, whom they have Reason to fear, but no Covenant or Promise for a Foundation of their Faith and Hope.

Thus I have briefly explained the Description the Apostle gives of the hopeless State of the Heathen World, which must have been our Condition to this Day, had not God in infinite Grace and Mercy sent his own Eternal Son to be our Saviour, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, to preach Peace to them that were afar off, that we should no longer be Strangers or Foreigners, but Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God. And if you have considered what I have said, I need add no more to make you sensible of the Goodness of God, the Love of our Saviour, and the happy Change of our Condition, that now we are not left to uncertain Guesses and Conjectures, but have a Covenant and Promise in Christ Jesus of the Forgiveness of our Sins and immortal Life, which I would not be without for all the World.

But I cannot but reflect with great Pity and Compassion upon those Men, who now

242 *The State of the Heathens*

Christ has appeared in the World to preach Salvation, wilfully put themselves into the Condition of the Heathen World before Christ appeared; who tho' they are not Idolaters, yet reject all Revelation, reject Christ, despise the Communion of the Church, renounce all Covenants and Promises, but what they say, they learn from the Light of Nature and Natural Religion, which can teach them nothing of the certain Forgiveness of our Sins, and our Resurrection to immortal Life. Such Men are to this Day without Christ, Aliens from the Common-wealth of *Israel*, or, to speak in the Christian Language, Aliens from the Christian Church, the Body of Christ; and therefore Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, and without God in the World. This is their Condition, and a very hopeless Condition it is. For whether the Gospel of Christ be true or no, they can have no certain Hope of Pardon, and immortal Life; for there is no other sure Foundation for Hope. But if the Gospel be true, as we have all the Reason in the World to believe it is, they are in a much worse State, than the Heathen World was in before Christ appeared. For their Ignorance of Christ might plead their Excuse, and the Times of this Ignorance, St. *Paul* tells us, God winked at; but these Men reject Christ now he is come, and shut their Eyes against that Light which

which shined so bright and dazzling, that it forced open the Eyes of the Heathen World, and made all the Powers of Darknes to fly before it. God open the Eyes of these Men, to see, acknowledge, and adore their Saviour, before they see him come, to their Amazement and Terror, in all his Majesty and Glory, to judge the World.

2

S

Li

on

we

to

M

an

po

lec

M

lig

are

Pr

the

a I



SERMON XIII.

Christ the Light of the World.

LUKE ii. 32.

A light to lighten the Gentiles.

THAT this is the Character of our Saviour Jesus Christ, that he is the Light of the Gentiles, needs no Proof; the only Question is, What is meant by it? Now we find in Scripture this Title of *Light* given to those, who were the great Teachers of Mankind; *John* the Baptist was *a burning and shining Light*; and Christ calls his Apostles *the Light of the world*: For as Knowledge is the Light of the Mind, so to teach Men the true Knowledge of God is to enlighten them; and those, who give Light, are according to their several Measures and Proportions the Lights of the World: But the Scripture in this Respect makes as great a Difference between Christ and all other A-

246 *Christ the Light of the World.*

postles, Prophets, and Teachers, as between essential and borrowed Light.

In *Zachary's Hymn*, *Luke i. 78.* he is stiled 'Ανατολή ἐξ ὕψους, *The day-spring from on high*, the East or Rising Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, that true Fountain of Light, which came from above, from the Father of Lights, to visit and enlighten the World: Whereas when he calls his Apostles *Lights*, he compares them only to the Light of a Candle: *Ye are the light of the world—Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house*, *Matth. v. 14, 15.*

The Evangelist *St. John* gives us such a Character of our Saviour, under the Notion of Light, as we can never understand, without owning him to be in his own Person Essential and Original Light. When he had ascribed the Creation of all Things to the Divine *Word*, which *in the beginning was with God, and was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made.* He adds, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men:* That is, he himself is Life, and gives Life to all things which live, even the Life of Reason to Mankind, which is the Life and the Light of Men: For I know no other Notion of a rational Life, which is the Life of Man, but the Powers of Reason and Knowledge, and the Natural Light of Men

is

Christ the Light of the World. 247

is Reason, for Revelation is a Supernatural Light; so that Reason is that Light and Life, which belongs to the Creation of Man, of which the Evangelist here speaks.

To the same purpose he tells us, Verse 9. *That was the true light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.* That Light, which lighteth every particular Man, can be no other than the eternal essential Light, which bestows the Principle of Reason and Knowledge on Mankind, *on every man coming into the World*, Ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, in his Natural Generation and Birth, which therefore must signify the Natural Principle of Reason and Understanding, which every Man brings into the World with him; and which, as the Evangelist tells us, he receives from this eternal, essential Light.

For it is a very hard Construction of the Words, to join Ἐρχόμενον with φῶς, as some learned Men do, who read the Words thus; *That is the true light, which coming into the World lighteth every man*; for besides, that every particular Man, as πάντα ἀνθρώπων signifies, is not enlightned by the preaching of the Gospel, there is no reasonable Pretence for changing the Order of the Words, unless we will deny, that this eternal Word, this essential Light, which made the World, and made Man, did bestow Natural Reason and Understanding on Mankind; and yet,

248 *Christ the Light of the World.*

whence should they have it but from their Maker?

That Christ is called the Ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that is to come, and the Light is said to come into the World, is no Reason to join these two wherever we meet them, and whatever the Construction of the Words be; and indeed the Words, which immediately follow, plainly refer this *lighting* to the first Creation; *He, that is this true light, was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not; as it is Verse 4. The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; which is the Reason, why this eternal Light, which first bestowed Reason on Mankind, was now to appear visibly in the World, to instruct those who would not learn from Nature. Which is plainly also distinguished from his coming to his own, in the next Verse, which signifies his appearing in human Nature, and manifesting himself to Israel, his own peculiar People.*

For this Reason St. John calls Christ the Ἀληθινὸν Φῶς, *the true light*, and by this Character distinguishes him from John the Baptist, *who was not that light, but came to bear witness to the light.* But was not John a true Prophet, a Teacher that came from God, and in that Sense *a true light*. Yes, most certainly: But he was not essential, original, perfect Light; not *the Day-spring*
from

Christ the Light of the World. 249

from on high; not that eternal Light and Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

This is the sure Foundation of the Christian Faith. To believe Christ to be only a Creature-Prophet, a created Light, though the most perfect Light, and the most excellent Prophet, that ever appeared in the World, cannot give such absolute Satisfaction to us, as to own him the eternal Word, and Wisdom of the Father, who enlightened all Men with Natural Reason and Understanding, and in the Fulness of Time, appeared personally in the World, to enlighten all the dark Corners of it, *to give light to them that sat in darkness, and the shadow of death.* This puts an End to all further Enquiries, as being such an absolute and uncontrollable Authority, as no Creature, whatever his Commission be, can pretend to. No Man will venture to dispute against essential Light and Wisdom, nor be so vain, as to pretend Reason against the Author and Giver of it. Of such mighty Consequence it is, to the absolute Perfection and infallible Certainty of the whole Christian Faith, to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son, the eternal Son of the living God, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father; that whatever other Reasons St. *John* might have for Beginning his Gospel with the eternal Divinity of the Word, which was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, I am sure this
was

250 *Christ the Light of the World.*

was a very good one, and there needed no other, that it is the surest Foundation of our Faith and Hope.

But my Text itself plainly acquaints us, who this Light is, for this Light of the Gentiles is the Glory of *Israel*, *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*. Now throughout the Old Testament, the *Glory of Israel*, when put absolutely, signifies the God of *Israel*, the Divine Presence, the Divine *Shecinah* or Glory, which dwelt among them: Thus when the Ark of God was taken, *the glory is said to be departed from Israel*, 1 Sam. iv. 22. that is, the Divine Presence, which was the Glory of *Israel*. Thus that God, who dwelt in the Tabernacle and Temple, is the King of Glory: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in. Who is this king of glory? the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle*, Psalm xxiv. 7, 8. Thus when God returned graciously to his People, and brought Salvation with him, *Glory is said to dwell in their land*, Psalm lxxxv. 9. that is, God now visibly dwelt among them again, by sensible Tokens of his Power and Presence. And for the same Reason God is called *the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted*, Psalm. lxxxix. 17. Thus, when *they made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image*, they are said to
change

Christ the Light of the World. 251

change their glory, that is, their God, into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass, Psalm cvi. 19, 20. And, to name no more, for this Reason God is said to fill the second Temple with glory, and that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former, because this true Glory of Israel should enter into it : *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts*, Haggai ii. 3—9. And this is that Glory St. Paul means, *Rom. ix. 4. Who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory : that is, the Divine Presence or Shecinah*, that dwelt among, which was indeed (especially upon great and solemn Occasions, such as giving the Law from Mount Sinai) attended with a Retinue of Angels ; but yet created Angels are no where called the *Shecinah*, or Presence of God, but only he who is called *the Angel of the Presence*, and by *Moses* called *the Presence*, in distinction from all created Angels : And indeed when God is said to dwell between the Cherubims, it is strange to me, that learned Men should make no Difference between the Divine Presence which dwells between the Cherubims, and the Cherubims between whom he dwells. The Divine Presence was always the same both in the Times of the Law and Gospel, even the Eternal Word and Son of God, tho' he manifested himself very differently ; under

252 *Christ the Light of the World.*

der the Law, in a Cloud of Glory, and a Retinue of Angels; under the Gospel, by his personal Appearance in the Flesh, as St. John tells us, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father.)* John i. 14.

When we speak of God's figurative Presence in the Tabernacle or Temple, this is not opposed to a true and real Presence; for God or his Divine Presence did truly and really dwell among them; but it signifies, that God, who was invisibly present, gave them only some external and visible Signs and Figures of his Presence, as the Cherubims, which covered the Mercy-seat, represented that God present there, on whom the Angels perpetually attend: But the Incarnation of the Word was his personal Presence in Human Nature, which made the Eternal Word, and his Divine Glory, as visible in Flesh, as Human Souls are.

Besides the different Nature of the two Covenants, this very Thing made a vast Difference between the Delivery of the Law, and the Preaching of the Gospel by Jesus Christ, and gave the Preheminence to the Gospel Revelation, beyond all other Kinds and Degrees of Prophecy: *God who at sundry times and in divers manners in time past spake to our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his son, Heb. i. 1, 2.* This
the

Christ the Light of the World. 253

the Apostle tells us, will extremely aggravate our Infidelity, and bring a terrible Vengeance on us: *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,* Heb. ii. 2, 3. What is the Meaning of this? That the Law given from Mount Sinai was spoke by a created Angel? This cannot be; for he that spoke, declares himself to be *the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Ægypt.* And thus the People believed, that *they heard God speak*; and thus God commands *Moses to say unto the children of Israel, ye have seen, that I have talked with you from heaven,* Exod. xx. 2, 19, 22. Which he minds them again of in the Repetition of the Law, *The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire,* Deut. v. 4, 24. And therefore when the Word is said to be *spoken by Angels*, it can signify no more than the Attendance and Presence of Angels at the Delivery of the Law: God spoke the Law with a terrible Majesty, encompassed with Thousands of Angels, but it was God that spake, not Angels, tho' they were the Attendants and Ministers of that awful Solemnity; a Figure of which was preserved in the Tabernacle of the Congregation, where God promised *to meet with Moses, and commune with him*

254 *Christ the Light of the World.*

him from above the mercy-seat, from between the two Cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony, Exod. xxv. 22. As we find it was done, Numb. vii. 89. And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation, to speak with God; then he heard the voice of one speaking to him from off the mercy-seat, which was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two Cherubims; and he spake unto him.

So that the Opposition here between the Word spoken by Angels, and the Gospel preached by Christ, relates not to the Speakers, but to the different Manner and Circumstances of giving the Law, and preaching the Gospel, which signify the different Degrees of Perfection in the Revelations, and carry different Obligations with them. Christ is that eternal Word by whom God made the World, redeemed *Israel*, spake the Law from Mount *Sinai*, &c. And this was a terrible Presence and Appearance, when he came down on the Mount, attended with Angels; but when he appeared personally in human Nature, as it was a more gracious, so it was a more visible and perfect Presence amongst us, and his Revelation must answer the Manner and Circumstances of his Appearance and Presence, which gives a more sacred Authority to the Gospel, as the most perfect, the most gracious, and most inviolable Institution,

Christ the Light of the World. 255

tution, which I take to be the true Force of the Apostle's reasoning in this Text.

Having thus seen, who this Divine and Heavenly Light is, which is risen upon the World, I proceed,

Secondly, To shew you for what Reason he appeared, and whom he came to enlighten : *A light to lighten the Gentiles.* He came to lighten all Mankind, but the *Gentiles* are particularly mentioned, as those, who most needed this Divine Light, and had the least Expectation of it. He was *the glory of his people Israel*, they were his own Peculium, whom he had chosen out of the rest of the World, and therefore there could be no question but he came to them; but the *Jews* themselves never dreamt, that God had so much Favour for the idolatrous Heathens, as to send a Divine Prophet and Saviour to them, *to turn them from darknes to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

This was absolutely necessary, if we will allow, that God retained any Kindness and Mercy for so much the greatest Part of Mankind, *who sat in darknes, and in the valley of the shadow of death*, and were perfectly hopeles and incurable, had not this *Day-spring from on high visited them.* St. Paul, who was the Apostle of the Gentiles, and *magnified his office*, frequently minds his Gentile Converts of the great Kindness and Love of
I God,

256 *Christ the Light of the World.*

God, in sending Christ to preach Peace to them who were afar off; as you may see in many Places of his Epistles, particularly, *Ephes. ii.* and *Titus iii.* And this we Gentiles have Reason to bless God for to this Day, and to the End of the World; and to lessen the Necessity of Christ's appearing, and the Goodness of God in sending him, is such an outrageous Contempt of this wonderful and mysterious Love, as it does not become Christians to hear with Patience. And yet such Men there have been, and still are among us, who to prepare the Way for Infidelity, by bringing Christianity into Contempt, make the coming of Christ into the World at best a Work of Supererogation for Mankind, even the blind and ignorant Heathens, knew enough without it to carry them to Heaven; which, were it true, they ought to have considered farther, whether they lived too, as those Men ought to live, who would go to Heaven.

Christians, who believe the Gospel, need no other Answer to these Men, but that Christ and his Apostles, who knew the State of the Heathen World much better than they, have declared their Case to be quite otherwise. The first Chapter to the *Romans*, and *1 Cor. i.* which give a Character not of the ignorant Multitude, but of their wise and learned Philosophers, who despised the Simplicity of the Gospel, may satisfy any Man
what

what their Wisdom and Knowledge in Matters of Religion was. But it may not be amiss to hear what these Men have to say.

They take it for granted, That what they call *Natural Religion* will carry Men to Heaven (of which more presently) and they think they find all the fundamental Principles of Natural Religion preserved safe amidst all the Corruptions of the Heathen Worship, and that is sufficient to qualify all their other Superstitions; as to consider this particularly.

I. The first Principle of Natural Religion is, That *there is a supreme God*, and this I grant the wisest Men among them did own; but how much the People understood of this, is uncertain: But yet this is not the true Natural Notion of God, *That there is a supreme God*; but, *That there is but one God, and that he is the supreme Lord, maker, and governor of the world; whom alone we must worship, and from whom alone we must expect all good things*; now it is certain that this Notion of a supreme God was lost in the Multitude of their Gods, and had no Place in their religious Worship, while they depended more upon their Country Gods, who they thought had the immediate Care and Government of them, than on the supreme: That tho' their Philosophers at least had some Knowledge of a supreme God, as St. Paul owns, *Rom. i.* yet he was the most neglected, and the most unknown

258 *Christ the Light of the World.*

God at that Time in the World; as the same Apostle tells the Men of *Athens*, when he saw the Altar inscribed, Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ, *To the unknown God, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you*; ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ᾔνουσcentes ἱστᾶμεν, *whom therefore not knowing ye worship, him declare I unto you*, viz. the God that made Heaven and Earth: Which does not prove, that they worshiped the supreme God under the Title of the Unknown God, but that they worshiped a God, whom they did not know; and St. Paul tells them, that the Unknown God was the Maker of Heaven and Earth, for there was no other God so unknown in the World as the true God; and therefore he took this Advantage from their superstitious Worship of an Unknown God, to preach that One Supreme God to them, whom they did not know.

Whatever Knowledge they had of the supreme God, it is certain they worshiped him not as God, but defiled themselves with the most absurd and stupid Idolatries; they worshiped Stocks and Stones, Devils and evil Spirits for Gods, that if they had any natural Notion of a supreme God, yet they paid no natural Worship to him: And is this such a Knowledge, and such a Worship of God, as would carry them to Heaven? As superseded the Necessity of any new Light,

Christ the Light of the World. 259

or new Revelation, and made it needless for God to teach them better?

II. Another Principle of Religion is, *That God is to be worshiped*; which is true also, but not the whole Truth: For the Principle of Natural Religion is, *That the supreme God alone is to be worshiped*, which, as you have already heard, was no Principle of the Pagan Religion. All then that this can signify, is, that Nature teaches all Mankind to worship what they call God, or that all Men have a natural Inclination to religious Worship; and what then? Is this all that we want to know, *That God is to be worshiped*? Did this sufficiently direct the Heathens, what God to worship, and how to worship him? Was there no need of a divine and heavenly Prophet to reform their Worship? Will they undertake to justify all the Pagan Idolatries and Superstitions? This they must do, if they will say, that there was no need to reform them. If Idolatry be the Work of the Devil, and the great Strength and Support of the Kingdom of Darkness, there was Reason for Christ's appearing to destroy the Works of the Devil, and to preach the Kingdom of God to the World.

III. Another Principle they say of Natural Religion is, *That piety and virtue are the principal parts of divine worship.* Now

260 *Christ the Light of the World.*

some of the wiser Heathens were sensible of this, that Piety and Virtue were necessary to recommend all our Worship to God ; and Reason will tell us this, that there can be no acceptable Worship without true Devotion, and that the Sacrifices of the Wicked are an Abomination to God ; but yet it is no Principle of Reason, as these Men would insinuate, that It is no Matter what our Worship be, if we but devout. Idolaters may be very devout, but their Devotion cannot reconcile God to their Idolatries ; if our Worship be idolatrous, which was the Case of the Heathens, the greater the Devotion is, the greater the Idolatry. And whatever Opinion they had of Virtue, there was little Appearance of it in the Rites and Ceremonies of the Pagan Worship, which are so notoriously known to have been obscene, inhuman, barbarous, and impious : That they erected Temples and Altars to Piety and Virtue, to Justice, Peace, and Faith, is no Proof, that these were thought the most essential Parts of Worship. They might worship these Virtues, which they transformed into Gods, to excuse themselves from the Practice of them, and to make Atonement for their Vices : It is certain the Worship of lewd and wanton Deities with impure Mysteries, was more likely to corrupt their Lives, than their building Temples and Altars to deified Virtues was to reform them ; and the abominable Wickedness

and

and Corruption of Manners in the Heathen World, which St. *Paul* tells us, was owing to their Idolatries, proves that it was so. So that whatever Opinion they had of Piety and Virtue, it is too plain, that they wanted a divine Prophet to teach them, how to worship God, and to practise Virtue.

IV. Another Principle of Natural Religion is, *To be sorry for our Sins, and to repent of them.* This indeed Nature does teach, as it teaches us to cry, when we feel Pain; for while we retain our natural Sense of Things, Sin is very painful, and as it deserves Punishment, so it will make us fear it; but all Sorrow even for Sin is not religious, but only a *godly sorrow*, or a Sorrow for offending God, which I do not remember among the Precepts of Philosophy. The *Stoics* rejected Repentance, as they did all other Passions, but thought, That the most absurd and unreasonable of them all: To reform the Errors of our Lives became a wise Man, but to be sorry for them they thought to no Purpose, since what was past could not be recalled: Which shews, that they had no regard to an offended God, which had been itself a good Reason for Repentance, especially had they thought Repentance itself (as these Men do) a sufficient Atonement. For we must observe, that though it be natural for Men to be sorry for their Sins, yet Repentance can be no Part of

262 *Christ the Light of the World,*

Natural Religion, unless Nature teaches us, that God will forgive the Sins of Penitents, merely for the Sake of their Repentance, and this Nature does not teach, nor was it any Principle of the Pagan Religion, as their numerous Sacrifices, Expiations, and Lustrations witness, which they placed more Confidence in, than in Repentance, nay, which they hoped would atone their Gods without Repentance: Some of their wise Men indeed taught, that no Sacrifices without Repentance would appease their Gods, but I do not find, that any of them thought, that mere Repentance without any other Atonement would do it; and yet this is the greatest Thing of all in the Religion of a Sinner, to know by what Means to reconcile God, and obtain the Forgiveness of Sin; and if mere Nature cannot certainly teach us this, all the rest that it teaches is of little Use to Sinners.

V. Another Principle they say of Natural Religion, is, *That God out of goodness and justice will reward and punish men according to their deserts, both in this life and in the next.* Now I grant it is very natural for good Men to hope for a Reward, and for bad Men to fear Punishment, both in this Life and in the next; though if we argue only from the Justice and Goodness of God, the Fears of Punishment must be much more certain, than the Hopes of a Reward, without the
Know-

Christ the Light of the World. 263

Knowledge of such an Atonement and Propitiation as God will accept, which mere Nature cannot teach us; which is not much for the Comfort of Sinners: And yet these natural Hopes and Fears are very much weakened by the unequal Rewards and Punishments of good and bad Men in this World, which was always thought such a Difficulty in Providence, as the wisest Men amongst them knew not well how to answer; and the Rewards and Punishments of the other World were not so certain and evident, as to have any great Influence upon their Lives; I am sure, not so certain, but that their greatest Philosophers desired better Proof of another Life, than what Nature gave them.

These they say are the fundamental Articles of Natural Religion, and as far as mere Nature can instruct us in these Matters, we may allow them to be so; but however right and orthodox they had been in the Theory, which I have shewn there is no Appearance of, yet as to Practice it is manifest, there was nothing of Natural Religion among them, unless Polytheism and Idolatry, the Worship of Stocks and Stones, of Devils and dead Men, who while they lived, were little better, and that with the most impious, lewd, and inhuman Rites, be Natural Religion, and if Nature teaches such Things, it unteaches all Religion and Virtue; but if this was such a Corruption of Religion as was

264 *Christ the Light of the World.*

much worse than none, such a Degeneracy of human Nature, as made them Enemies to God, and vile Slaves and Vassals to wicked Spirits, such a State of perfect Darknes, as had extinguished the very Light of Nature in them, if God had any Designs of Mercy for such apostate Creatures, it was necessary to cause a new divine conquering Light to rise upon the World. We see, what the State of the Heathen World was, and a little Consideration may satisfy us, how irrecoverable it was without this divine Light.

For, *First*, Philosophy, which was the only natural Means left to enlighten the World, was found not only very ineffectual to that End, but very hurtful. Several of the Philosophers reasoned very well concerning the Being of a God, but when they came to inquire into the Nature of God, they were very uncertain, very inconsistent with themselves, and very absurd in their Speculations; but that which is most to my present purpose is, that they all entertained such Opinions concerning the Divinity, as justified one kind of Idolatry or other, and therefore Philosophy could not cure Idolatry. The *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists* came nearest the true Knowledge of God, and spake most honourably of him; but tho' they owned one supreme God, they taught the Worship of inferior Deities, Dæmons, and Heroes, which

Hiero-

Christ the Light of the World. 265

Hierocles makes the first Precept in the *Pythagorean* Philosophy. And *Socrates* himself is very much mistaken by those, who think, that he died a Martyr for the Worship of the one God, in Opposition to the Pagan Polytheism and Idolatry; for tho' he rejected the poetical Fictions and fabulous Stories of their Gods, he never taught, that they were to worship none but the supreme God; all the Heathen Philosophy allowing and teaching the Worship of inferior Deities, as those, who had the Government of the World shared amongst them, and were middle Beings betwixt the supreme God and Men. It was this very Thing that so alarmed all the Pagan Philosophers against Christianity, that it condemned the Worship of all other Deities, but the supreme God, as is evident in *Gelsus*, and *Porphyry*, and *Julian* the Apostate, who were upon this account, as bitter Enemies as any Christianity had, and yet very refined Philosophers.

The *Stoics*, who made the World to be God, and ascribed Divinity to almost every Part of it, found Gods enough to worship, the Sun and Moon, and Stars and Planets, the Earth and Air, and Fire and Water, which they would no more part with, than they would with their Philosophy. In short, there never were such absurd Idolatries and Superstitions, but what might be justified by the Principles of one Philosophy or other,
and

266 *Christ the Light of the World.*

and which our modern Deists, who reject all revealed Religion, seem to this Day to think very excusable upon the same Principles, which is no inconsiderable Argument, that these Superstitions and Idolatries must still have prevailed, had Men been left to the Guidance of mere natural Reason; especially when we see the Christian Church corrupted with the like Idolatries in the Worship of Saints, and Angels, and the Virgin *Mary*, the Host, and Reliques, and Images, and these Idolatries justified by the very same Principles. For if Christianity itself can be corrupted by the Pagan Philosophy, it is not likely, that Philosophy would ever have cured their Pagan Idolatries.

But besides this, how rightly soever the Philosophers had reasoned concerning God and religious Worship, it was morally impossible, that they should ever have reformed the World: Idolatry was too well fixed to be shaken by philosophical Disputes; and though these Men were permitted to dispute and wrangle with one another, it was dangerous to attempt any Innovation in Religion; neither Magistrates nor People would suffer their Gods or religious Ceremonies to be disputed; this was *Socrates's* Accusation, and it cost him his Life, which taught other Philosophers more Modesty, who had no Mind to be Martyrs for their Philosophy: And therefore that they might dispute the more securely,

Christ the Light of the World. 267

ly, they pretended that the Religion they received from their Ancestors was not concerned in their Disputes; that it was a different Thing to be a Believer and a Philosopher, that as Philosophers they may ask a Reason for the Belief and Worship of their Gods, but they believe their Ancestors without any Reason: Thus *Cotta* * prefaces his Dispute, wherein he labours with all his Wit, and Eloquence, and Philosophy, to ridicule the Being and Worship of their Gods. And whatever this might signify more, it certainly signified thus much, that they would leave Religion as they found it; that whatever they thought as Philosophers, they would worship such Gods, and after such a Manner, as their Fathers had done before them, and therefore no Reformation of Religion could be expected from them.

II. *Secondly*, We must consider the Pagan World under the Power and Government of Evil Spirits, whom they worshiped for Gods, and mere natural Reason could never break this Yoke, nor deliver them from this spiritual Bondage. The modern Advocates for Deism charge all the Idolatries and Corruptions of the Pagan Worship upon the Cheats and Impostures of their Priests, and think this a good Reason to reject all Pretences to Reve-

* *Tull. De Nat. Deor.* L. iii.

268 *Christ the Light of the World.*

lation, since the surest Way never to be cheated, is to believe nothing; but tho' there is Reason to suspect, that Pagan Priests were none of the honestest Men, yet there is no Reason to believe that all the barbarous, lewd, inhuman Mysteries in their Worship, were the Cheats and Impostures of their Priests, who were as much imposed upon by evil Spirits, as the People were.

The Gospel assures us, That *the Devil is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which ruleth in the children of disobedience*, that is, in all Heathen Idolaters: That *the Gentiles worshiped Devils, and not God*: That *Christ the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil*, that is, idolatry: That *to turn men from darkness unto light, is to turn them from the power of Satan unto God*. Which is Proof enough, that their idolatrous Worship, which consisted of such inhuman and impious Rites, as no Man could be wicked, senseless, and impudent enough to appoint for Acts of Worship, was not the Invention and Institution of Priests, but of those Evil Spirits whom they worshiped, who prescribed the Rites and Ceremonies of their own Worship, as God did of his: For when Men worship any invisible Being besides the One Supreme God, good Spirits will not attend, nor receive their Worship, as knowing that divine Honours do not belong to them: but evil Spirits will,
and

Christ the Light of the World. 269

and contrive such a Worship as shall corrupt the Lives and Manners of Men, and all their natural Notions of God, and of Good and Evil: Which is a very good Reason, if there were no other, to confine all religious Worship to the One Supreme God, to prevent the Cheats and Impostures of wicked Spirits, who will make themselves Gods, if we own and worship more Gods than one. And therefore we may observe, that the Devil never appeared concerned wholly to banish the Belief of a supreme God out of the World, while Polytheism and the Honour and Worship of their Country Gods was secure: No Poets or Philosophers were ever persecuted upon this score, though they generally owned a supreme God; for the Devil could make himself supreme in such a Multitude of Gods, when he pleased, and either appoint no public Worship for the supreme God, or such a Worship as should become only the supreme Devil: But when *Socrates* began to make too bold with their Country and Poetical Gods, and the Mysteries of their Worship, tho' he did not reject the Worship of all inferior Deities, yet this was a dangerous Example, and therefore *Socrates* must suffer for it, to prevent any further Attempts of this kind, and he is the only Philosopher that was ever persecuted upon this account. It is certain, this was the true Reason of those outrageous Persecutions of the Christians; not

270 *Christ the Light of the World.*

that they worshiped the supreme God, nor that they worshiped Christ, whom *Tiberius* would have received into the Number of their Gods, which was no new Thing in the Pagan Theology, to make Gods of dead Men; but that they rejected and condemned the Worship of the Heathen Gods, and would worship none but God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Which shews, what a weak Foundation the mere Belief of a supreme God is for natural Religion, which was reconcileable with all the Idolatries of the Heathen World.

Now if this was the State of the Heathen World, that they were under the Power and Government of Evil Spirits, what could mere Reason do to set them free? For as much as our Deists despise Revelation, this was not the general Sense of Mankind; They not only received a Revelation, but thought Revelation superior to Reason; and when they received the Rites and Ceremonies of their Worship from those whom they thought Gods (as they believed they did) how contrary soever they were to the Reason and Sense of Mankind, to all the Laws of Modesty, Virtue, and Humanity, they thought that a very good Religion, which would please the Gods they worshiped. This not only barred up their Minds against the Convictions of natural Reason, but even against the Gospel itself, as *St. Paul* tells us, 2 *Cor.* ii. 3, 4. *If*

our

Christ the Light of the World. 271

*our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Now if some Men were so bewitched with their Idolatries, and a great Veneration for their Gods, as to shut their Eyes against the glorious Light of the Gospel, what could the faint and glimmering Light of Reason do to undeceive them? This may satisfy us, what great Occasion there was for this Sun of Righteousness to rise upon the World. I will not hence conclude, that God was bound to make a new Revelation of his Will to Mankind, which is too bold and presumptuous a Way of speaking, but I may safely conclude, what great Reason we Gentiles have to bless God, that he hath done it; for we were in Darkness, and must have continued so, had not this *Day-spring from on high visited us*, and therefore *Glory be to God in the highest, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.**

S E R-

3

S

Ho

H

a P

eter

hov

ly

she

Da

Co

ne/s

wh

Wo

I

Lig

of J

at

V



SERMON XIV.

How Christ enlightens the World.

LUKE ii. 32,

A light to lighten the Gentiles.

HAVING thus shewn you, who this divine and heavenly Light is, no less a Person than the eternal Son of God, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, and how much the World wanted such a heavenly Teacher, I proceed in the next Place to shew, what this divine Light is, with which this *Day-spring from on high* hath visited the dark Corners of the Earth, those *who sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; and by what new Methods he hath enlightened the World.

I. As for the first, what this new divine Light is, it is the Light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was a glorious Light, at its first appearing, which surprized the

VOL. II.

T

World,

274 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

World, and gave a new Life to it; made great and hasty Conquests, dispelled Ignorance, and Error, and Idolatry, and all the Works of Darknes, like the Sun, when it breaks forth out of a thick and gloomy Cloud.

But this divine Light itself is now so over-cast, that few Men see its true and native Glory, or know what this Light is, or whether it be any Light at all, at least whether it be a new Light, a true divine Light, or only Nature, and Natural Reason, and Natural Religion brought again to Light, after the various Impostures, and Corruptions, and the great Degeneracy of Mankind. That Zeal, which some have expressed, and do to this Day, for what they call Natural Religion has so obscured the Glory of the Gospel, that few Men rightly understand what Christianity is, but are confounded between Natural and Revealed Religion, and lose a just Sense and Reverence for both; that it is necessary to rectify this Mistake, and to enquire into the Causes and Progress of it.

Now, *First*, some wise and good Men have insisted very much upon this Distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion, with a very honest Design, but without being aware of the ill Consequences of it. Whatever they find in the Gospel of Christ, which sounds like what some of the ancient Philoso-

phers

How Christ enlightens the World. 275

phers who had no other Teacher but Nature, have taught concerning the Being and Providence of God, and that Homage and Worship which is due to him, and the Precepts of Moral Virtue, and the Immortality of the Soul, and the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, nay, whatever they think they can find any natural Reason and Proof of, all this they call Natural Religion, and think it a great Commendation and Confirmation of Christianity, that most of its Doctrines and Precepts are no other than what Nature taught, or could have taught Mankind, and which when taught, natural Reason must approve. And therefore tho' they confess, that the Reason and Manners of Men were so corrupted, that there needed a divine Prophet to expound Nature and its Laws more perfectly, and to revive and reinforce the Practice of them, yet all this is Natural Religion still, and the great Advantage we receive by preaching the Gospel, is a more complete and perfect System of Laws, and a greater Confirmation of immortal Life by the Resurrection of Christ, and more express Promises of the Pardon of Sin, than the World ever had before.

But then they own, that what concerns the Person and Undertaking of our Saviour, is wholly owing to Revelation, and they believe very orthodoxly concerning the Divinity of Christ, and his Incarnation, and the Sa-

276 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

tisfaction of his Death, and Justification by Faith in his Blood, and his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven, and Intercession for us at the Right-hand of God, and his coming again to judge both the Quick and the Dead; and this they call Revealed Religion, or in a strict Notion the Christian Religion: Now these are very Orthodox Christians, and mean no Harm by this Distinction of Natural and Revealed Religion, which they make the two Parts of the Christian Religion; but they ought to have considered, that Christianity is but one Religion, and therefore tho' the Laws of Nature may be taken into the Christian Religion, yet then they lose the Form and Notion of Natural Religion, and become the Laws of Christianity, which changeth both their Place and Use, as I shall shew hereafter: But let us now consider, what ill Improvements some Men have made of this Distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion. For,

II. The *Socinian* turns Christianity into the mere Religion of Nature, reformed and improved by Jesus Christ. And this were reasonable enough, were there such a Religion of Nature, in the alone Observation of which Sinners should be saved, for then no more could be required of Sinners, then such a Faith in God, and Obedience to such Laws, as Nature teaches, and then the only Work
of

How Christ enlightens the World. 277

of a divine Prophet would be, to instruct Mankind more perfectly than the Philosophers had done in the Religion and Laws of Nature. The only Work of such a Prophet is to teach us the Way to Heaven, and if Natural Religion be this Way, though the stupid Ignorance and Degeneracy of Mankind may make a new Revelation necessary to revive and awaken this Natural Sense and Knowledge, yet Nature must be the Standard of Revelation, and natural Reason the last Judge of it. Now in consequence of this, they reject all Mysteries, that is, whatever mere natural Reason cannot teach, nor comprehend; that is, all the peculiar Articles of the Christian Faith, the Doctrine of the holy and ever-blessed Trinity, the Divinity and Incarnation of Christ, and the proper Atonement and Satisfaction of his Death, for natural Reason knows nothing of all this, nor is it any Part of Natural Religion; and therefore must be struck out of the Gospel of our Saviour, as Nonsense, and Contradiction, and absolute Impossibilities, and good for nothing but to puzzle our Faith, and confound all our natural Notions of God and Religion. I do not dispute these Matters now, but only observe whence this Contempt and Aversion to Christian Mysteries proceeds; which there can be no other Pretence for, but the Sufficiency of Natural Religion, and consequently of mere natural

278 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Knowledge for the Salvation of Sinners. For if Sinners cannot be saved by Nature, but by Grace, the Means and the Knowledge of Salvation must be supernatural too, what Nature cannot teach us, such Mysteries as are Foolishness to the mere natural Man.

III. The Deist carries this much further, and from the Pretence of the Sufficiency of Natural Religion to save Sinners, and the Sufficiency of mere natural Reason to instruct us in the Religion of Nature, reject all divine and supernatural Revelation as useless in itself, and liable to great Cheats and Impostures. Those, who believe there is a God, or at least do not think fit to own, that they do not, must not reject all Religion; for Natural Reason teaches, that if there be a God, he ought to be worshiped, and therefore they allow of Religion as far as Nature directs, which all Mankind agreed in, till the various Pretences to Revelation by Heathens, *Jews*, *Christians*, and *Mahometans*, made so many new Religions, directly contrary to each other; and the only Way to reduce Religion to any Certainty, and to deliver Mankind from these various Superstitions, is to bring it back to the State of Nature, and to worship God, and observe such Laws as the Reason of Mankind agrees in. The Vanity of which Pretence would soon be discovered, were Men set right as to this Distinction between Natural
and

How Christ enlightens the World. 279

and Revealed Religion. For if Sinners cannot be saved by Nature, but by Grace, mere Nature cannot teach us such a Religion as can save us. The Terms of our Salvation must depend upon the free Choice and good Pleasure of God, and therefore we can never know what they are, unless he please to reveal them to us; which roots up the very Foundations of Deism, and makes Revelation as necessary as the Institution of such a Religion, whereby Sinners may be saved. These are the Mischiefs of that Distinction, as it is usually managed, between Natural and Revealed Religion, which makes it necessary to discourse this Matter more particularly, if we would rightly understand the Christian Religion.

Man was made to know God, and to worship him, and to obey him; and this natural Faith, and Worship, and Obedience, which results from the Frame and Constitution of a reasonable Nature, and is owing to that natural Dominion and Propriety, which God has over all his Creatures, is what we call Natural Religion, this is what always was, and always will be due to God, as the Maker and Sovereign Lord of the World, and therefore there never can be any Religion without that Homage and Obedience which Nature teaches us to pay to God.

Thus far I think all Mankind are agreed, who believe that there is a God, and that there is any natural Homage and Obedience

280 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

due to him from reasonable Creatures; but there are three Things which occasion great Mistakes.

First, Some teach, that natural Reason is the sole Standard of Religion in a State of Nature; that God gives us no other Laws, but what Nature teaches, nor requires any other Homage or Obedience from us, but to obey the Dictates of right Reason with respect to our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves; and thus they discard all Revelation, and all positive Institutions: Now suppose we were in the original State of Nature, which we are not; suppose natural Reason could infallibly teach us our whole Duty, as far as mere Nature reaches, both towards God and Man, which the Experience of the World for so many Ages proves it has not done; yet does natural Reason tell us, that God neither can nor will make any other Discoveries of himself to Mankind, but by the Light of Nature; or that if he should think fit to give us any positive Laws beyond what Nature teaches, we were not bound to obey them; may not the wise Government of the World, and the Improvement of our Natures above their original State, require such positive Institutions? If we believe the History of *Moses*, even in Paradise itself, whether Man should die or be immortal was referred to the Tryal of a positive Law, *in the day that thou eatest thereof,*

How Christ enlightens the World. 281

thereof, thou shalt surely die; and the Sanctification of the seventh Day was a positive Institution, which mere natural Reason without such an Institution, could not have obliged us to. And tho' this signifies nothing to those who reject the History of *Moses*, and all divine Revelation, yet it must convince all others, that even in a State of Innocence, in Paradise itself, mere natural Reason was not the only Rule of religious Worship, but God reserved to himself the Appointment and Direction of his own Worship. Those who reject all positive Institutions, that they may confine religious Worship to the mere Dictates of natural Reason, cannot shew any Religion from the Beginning of the World to this Day, without some positive Institutions, and such as they will not pretend any natural Reason for. If they will not believe the History of *Moses*, which yet is the most ancient and most credible History in the World, let them search all the Heathen Records, and try where they can find this Natural Religion they talk of, without Priests, and Sacrifices, and Oracles, and Temples, and Altars, and various Rites of Expiation, some more absurd and barbarous than others, but all such as mere Nature never taught, and had no natural Reason to support them. We know indeed whence they had them, not from the Inventions of Priests, as is pretended, but from the Institution of evil Spirits, in Imitation of that
Worship,

282 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Worship, which God himself instituted in the Patriarchal or Jewish Church; but this is not the present Question; all that I shall observe is this, That if mere natural Reason be the only Rule and Standard of Worship, and of all the Rites and Ceremonies of it, it is strange, that all Mankind from the Beginning of the World should either be ignorant of this Rule, or so universally and notoriously transgress it, that there never was such a pure Natural Religion in the World, as these Men talk of; nor is there any formed Society of Men to this Day, who worship God after this Manner: Nature taught all Mankind to worship God, to pray unto him, and to praise him, but they always thought that God knew best how he would be worshiped, and readily complied with all those Rites of Worship, which they either did, or believed they did, receive from their Gods; which is a Demonstration against such a Natural Religion, as is opposed to all divine Revelation, and divine Institutions.

Secondly, Another Mistake is, That when Men talk of Natural Religion, they do not consider what the true State of Nature is; for pure Natural Religion is fitted only to the original State of Nature, and will fit no other State. But I have already explained this at large in the Sermon *concerning prayer in the name of Christ.* Sermon XI.

But,

How Christ enlightens the World. 283

But, *Thirdly*, the fundamental Mistake of all is, that Men do not distinguish between the Principles and the Laws of Nature, and the Religion of Nature; and therefore when they find some of the Principles and the Laws of Nature received into Christianity, they either conclude, that Christianity is nothing but the Reformation and Improvement of Natural Religion or only a Superstructure on that Foundation, and thus distinguish two Parts in Christianity, which they call Natural and Revealed Religion. Now it must be granted, that some of those Principles and Laws, which all Men attribute to Nature, are so essential to all Religion, that there can be no Notion of Religion without them; for as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently serve him.* That there is a God and a Providence, that this God is to be worshiped by Prayer and Praises, that we must observe the Laws of Sobriety and Justice, and such other moral Virtues, is the necessary Foundation, the *Substrata Materia* of all Religion and all human Laws too; and if every thing is Natural Religion where these are found, *Paganism*, and *Judaism*, and *Mahometanism*, as well as *Christianity*, are all Natural Religions, notwithstanding the different Forms wherein they appear. But we know it is the Form, and not the Matter, which distinguishes the
several

282 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Worship, which God himself instituted in the Patriarchal or Jewish Church; but this is not the present Question; all that I shall observe is this, That if mere natural Reason be the only Rule and Standard of Worship, and of all the Rites and Ceremonies of it, it is strange, that all Mankind from the Beginning of the World should either be ignorant of this Rule, or so universally and notoriously transgress it, that there never was such a pure Natural Religion in the World, as these Men talk of; nor is there any formed Society of Men to this Day, who worship God after this Manner: Nature taught all Mankind to worship God, to pray unto him, and to praise him, but they always thought that God knew best how he would be worshiped, and readily complied with all those Rites of Worship, which they either did, or believed they did, receive from their Gods; which is a Demonstration against such a Natural Religion, as is opposed to all divine Revelation, and divine Institutions.

Secondly, Another Mistake is, That when Men talk of Natural Religion, they do not consider what the true State of Nature is; for pure Natural Religion is fitted only to the original State of Nature, and will fit no other State. But I have already explained this at large in the Sermon concerning *prayer in the name of Christ.* Sermon XI.

But,

How Christ enlightens the World. 283

But, *Thirdly*, the fundamental Mistake of all is, that Men do not distinguish between the Principles and the Laws of Nature, and the Religion of Nature; and therefore when they find some of the Principles and the Laws of Nature received into Christianity, they either conclude, that Christianity is nothing but the Reformation and Improvement of Natural Religion or only a Superstructure on that Foundation, and thus distinguish two Parts in Christianity, which they call Natural and Revealed Religion. Now it must be granted, that some of those Principles and Laws, which all Men attribute to Nature, are so essential to all Religion, that there can be no Notion of Religion without them; for as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently serve him.* That there is a God and a Providence, that this God is to be worshiped by Prayer and Praises, that we must observe the Laws of Sobriety and Justice, and such other moral Virtues, is the necessary Foundation, the *Substrata Materia* of all Religion and all human Laws too; and if every thing is Natural Religion where these are found, *Paganism*, and *Judaism*, and *Mahometanism*, as well as *Christianity*, are all Natural Religions, notwithstanding the different Forms wherein they appear. But we know it is the Form, and not the Matter, which distinguishes the
several

284 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

several Kinds and Species of Things, and thus it is in Religion, as well as in the Works of Nature; there are some Principles common to all Religions, as Matter is to natural Productions, but change their Place and Use, as they are transplanted into different Religions.

The better to understand this, we must consider what the true Notion of Religion is, in our present Enquiry; which does not signify merely, the Worship of God in general, for then there could be no Dispute between the different sorts of Religion, which all pretend to the Worship of God, and it would be no great Matter by what Name any Religion were called: But Religion signifies such a Faith, and Worship, and Obedience to God, as will recommend us to his Favour, and procure our Reward; this Natural Religion would once have done in the State of Innocence; and if there be any Thing now which deserves the Name of Natural Religion, it must do so still, and then we must be saved by Nature, by our natural Powers, by our natural Homage and Obedience, by a natural Covenant, which contains no supernatural Grace and Promises, no High-priest, no Sacrifice, no Mediator or Advocate; but we must serve God in our own Strength, procure his Favour by our own Merits and Deserts, and be accepted by him in our own Names, and for our own sakes. This is Natural Religion, and those who think they can
be

How Christ enlightens the World. 285

be saved by these Terms, may try if they please; but this is a certain Demonstration, that whatever natural Laws may be received into Christianity, yet Natural Religion can never consist with, much less be a Part of, the Christian Religion. For the Christian Religion contradicts this Doctrine of Salvation by the Powers and Works of Nature, in every Part of it; every Thing is transacted in the Name of Christ, and all the Promises of Grace and Mercy are made in Him; all the supernatural Supplies of Grace, to renew and sanctify our Natures, and give us the Victory over this World, are derived from Him; the best Men, and the best Works of the best Men, find their Acceptance only in Him. We cannot pray acceptably to God, nor expect a gracious Answer of our Prayers, without praying in his Name, and for his Sake. And the truest and sincerest Penitents obtain the Pardon of their Sins, not merely for the sake of their Repentance, but thro' Faith in the Blood of Christ, that is, in Virtue of his Sacrifice, and Intercession for us. And for this Reason all the Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings, and Alms, and all the Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life, and Repentance itself, a broken and a contrite Heart, are called Sacrifices, and the Christian Church a Royal Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ: Which shews, that it is not their intrinsic

286 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

trinfick Worth and Merit, which is all the Acceptance mere Nature can give them, but the meritorious Sacrifice and Intercession of Christ, which gives them their Acceptance, our Relation to whom makes us Priests, and all the Good we do in Obedience to the Laws of our Saviour, Sacrifices. So that unless Christianity prescribes two contrary Ways of Salvation, by Nature and by Grace, by Faith and by Works, which are so constantly opposed to each other in the New Testament, there is no such Religion of Nature now, whereby Man can be saved; and that is no Religion, which will not save us. That tho' some of the Laws of Nature are incorporated into Christianity, yet their Form and Use is changed, and made purely Christian.

All Men grant, that there can be no Salvation for Sinners without Repentance, and if the Gospel promises Pardon of Sin to true Penitents only for the Sake of Christ, those who believe the Gospel of Christ, must believe that Natural Religion does not promise Forgiveness of Sins to Penitents, merely for their Repentance; for the Gospel of Christ does not contradict any essential Principle of Natural Religion, tho' it changes its Form. And yet if Natural Religion promises Forgiveness of Sins to all Penitents, merely upon the score of their Repentance, and the Gospel pardons no Penitents, how sincere soever they be, without believing in Christ for Pardon

How Christ enlightens the World. 287

don and Forgiveness, it is plain, that the Gospel does contradict this Principle of Natural Religion, if it were one ; for it forgives no Penitent merely for his Repentance, and thereby excludes all Deists and Infidels, how penitent soever, from Forgiveness, who, as they state the Matter, by the Principles of Natural Religion have a natural Right to it. Thus the Gospel of Christ, which is the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, instead of enlarging the Grace of God to Sinners, would really confine it, by excluding those from Pardon and Forgiveness, who had a natural Right to it by the Laws and Religion of Nature, which should make all Christians, who would not lessen and reproach the Grace of God, in the Salvation of Sinners by Jesus Christ, more cautious of allowing, that the Forgiveness of penitent Sinners upon their mere Repentance, is a Principle of Natural Religion : If there were no Forgiveness for Sinners, tho' penitent, without a Saviour and Redeemer, it must be acknowledged infinite Goodness in God, to send his own Son into the World to save Sinners ; but if mere Repentance could have obtained Forgiveness of our Sins from God, without a Saviour, and none but believing Penitents can be pardoned and forgiven by a Saviour, which excludes all the World of Unbelievers from Pardon and Forgiveness, this does not seem to recommend the Love
of

288 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

of God to Sinners, in providing a Saviour. I am sure it is this Principle which encourages so many Men in Deism and Infidelity, that they hope for Pardon and Salvation without a Saviour; for so far they reason right, that if Forgiveness of Sins to Penitents ever was a Principle of Nature, it is so still, and ever will be so under all Variety of Dispensations; and then they think there is no Necessity of believing, or any Danger in rejecting a Saviour: And it is this which so obscures the Doctrine of Salvation by Christ, that they cannot discern the Reasons of Christ's coming into the World, much less of the Expiation and Atonement of our Sins by his accursed Death.

But still to make this the more evident, I observe further, that as Natural Religion under its natural Form can have no Place in Christianity, so those very Principles and Laws of Nature which are taken into Christianity, receive such a new Form there from a Mixture of Christian Principles, that there is nothing purely natural to be found in the Christian Religion. This will be thought a very great Paradox by many Men, till they bring it to a Tryal; and the fairest Tryal of it is, to examine our Creed, our Worship, our Laws, in all which they will find some natural Principles, but nothing merely natural.

As, to begin with our Creed, the first Article of which has the most of Nature in it: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker*

How Christ enlightens the World. 289

of heaven and earth. To believe that there is a God, and that he is Almighty, and the Maker of Heaven and Earth, are all natural Principles; but this alone is not the Christian Faith; which requires us to believe that this Almighty God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, is God the Father; the Father of *Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord*, as it immediately follows in the next Article. The Christian Faith, as it respects God the sole Object of it, is contained in the Form of Baptism, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: As it follows also in the Creed, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. Now though to believe that there is a God, be a Principle of Nature, yet to believe a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is this One God, whom we are to adore and worship, according to their different Relations in the Oeconomy of Man's Salvation, all Men confess is no natural Principle; but yet is the fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, without the Belief of which no Man is a Christian. So that the believing One God, without believing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is no Article of the Christian Faith; and then I am sure there is nothing purely natural in the Christian Creed. For no Man will pretend that any thing that follows concerning *Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, his miraculous incarnation and birth, his crucifixion,*

290 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

*cifixion, death and burial, his resurrection from the dead on the third day, his ascension into heaven, and advancement at the right-hand of God, and his coming again at the last day to judge the world, wherein the whole Mystery of our Redemption consists: I say, no Man will pretend these to be natural Principles, but purely Christian. For, as for a future Judgment, tho' it was the general Belief of the Heathen World, who believed a future State, that good Men should be rewarded and the wicked punished, yet none of them ever thought of a general Day of Judgment, in which all Mankind should be summoned before the Tribunal of God, to receive according to their Works; much less did they know any Thing of the Person of their Judge; that God had appointed a Day wherein he would judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man (Jesus Christ) whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead, as *St. Paul* tells the Men of *Athens*, in *Acts* xvii. 31.*

The like may be said concerning those other Articles, *I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints*: For the Holy Ghost was as much unknown by Nature, as a Trinity of divine Persons; and the Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints, signify the Christian Church, and Christian Communion which

How Christ enlightens the World. 291

Nature could no more teach us, than it could teach us the Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ, and the Union of all true Believers in one mystical Body in him.

The next Article is, *The forgiveness of sins*; which, I have already shewn you, mere Nature did not, and could not teach, and therefore is no Article of Natural Religion, but is purely Christian.

Thus, *The resurrection of the body*, which is the great Gospel Promise, was unknown to the Heathen World, and despised and scorned by their Philosophers, who understood so very little of it, that they thought St. Paul preached some new God to them, when he preached the Resurrection; which was the Judgment of the Philosophers at Athens concerning St. Paul, that he seemed to be a Setter-forth of strange Gods, *because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection*, Acts xvii. 18.

As for the last Article of the Creed, *Everlasting Life*, it must be acknowledged, that Men had a natural Persuasion of the Immortality of their Souls; but this alone is not the Christian Immortality, nor the Everlasting Life in the Creed, which is immediately subjoined to the Resurrection of the Body; for throughout the Scripture, tho' there is Evidence enough that the Soul does survive the Death of the Body, yet this is no where called immortal Life, but the Soul in a State of

292 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Separation is under the Power and Dominion of Death. The Christian Immortality commences with the Resurrection of the Body, for then the Man lives, and lives for ever, when Soul and Body are reunited never to part more. And this everlasting Life must be as much unknown to Nature, as the Resurrection of the Body is. And now let any Man consider, what little Reason there is for Christians so much to magnify natural Knowledge and Natural Religion, when there is not one entire Article of the Christian Faith, which mere Nature teaches.

II. Let us now consider the Christian Worship; and how much of Natural Religion there is in that. Now it is certain Nature does teach us, that it is the Duty of all reasonable Creatures, to worship God the great Maker and Governor of the World, and that Prayer, and Praises, and Thanksgivings, are the proper Acts of religious Worship; and this is a Principle common to all Religions, how different and contrary soever the Nature, and Forms, and Ceremonies of their Worship be; and such a Principle which is common to all Religions, can give no distinguishing Mark and Character to any; and therefore to find natural Worship in the Christian Religion, it is not enough to say, that Nature teaches us to worship God, but we must find the natural Form of religious
Worship

How Christ enlightens the World. 293

Worship there, and that we may in vain seek for; for, as I have already shewn you, natural Worship hath no Priest, no Sacrifice, no Mediator, no Name to pray to God in but every Man's own: Whereas in the Christian Religion, Christ alone is our great High-priest, our Sacrifice, our Mediator, and all our Prayers, and Sacrifices, and Thanksgivings, must be offered up only in his Name, and are accepted only in him; which plainly enough distinguishes the true Christian Worship from what is purely natural.

But besides this, the Christian Worship has a new Object, a new Matter of Worship, very distinct from what is purely natural. In a State of Nature, the only Object of religious Worship was God, considered as the great Maker, the Supreme and Sovereign Lord of the World, without any Distinction of divine Persons in the Unity of the Godhead: But now we must worship God the Father, in and through his only Son our Lord Jesus Christ; for all Men must honour the Son as they honour the Father; we must adore him as that eternal Word by whom God made the World; that incarnate God, who became Man, suffered and died upon the Cross for the Redemption of Sinners, whom God hath raised from the Dead, and advanced to his own Right-hand with great Glory and Power, and made him Lord and Judge both of the Quick and of the Dead: We must still

294 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

praise and glorify God, for his Works of Creation and Providence, but now his divinest Glory, the principal Exercise of Christian Praises and Thanksgivings, relates to the Work of our Redemption: *That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* His Incarnation, Death and Sufferings, his Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, and powerful Intercession for us at God's Right-hand, are the proper Subjects for Christian Anthems, which Nature taught nothing of.

Thus the Subject-matter of our Prayers to God are greatly changed and altered in the Christian Religion: For as all our Prayers must be offered up to God in the Name of Christ, so they must principally respect the spiritual Blessings of his Kingdom. We may and ought to pray to God still for all temporal good Things, for the Supply of all our Wants, and our Defence and Protection from all Dangers; but as our Saviour teaches us not to be careful and solicitous about these Things, so we must ask them of God as secondary Blessings, with Submission to his Will, and in Subordination to our spiritual Interest; as our Saviour teaches us, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,* Matth. vi. 33.

There

How Christ enlightens the World. 295

There needs no other Proof of this, than that Form of Prayer which Christ himself taught his Disciples, as the most absolute and perfect Pattern of Christian Worship, wherein there is not any one Petition, in all its Circumstances, which mere Nature teaches. As to take a brief View of it.

Our Father which art in heaven : Where our Saviour teaches us to pray to God by the Name of a Father, that is, in the Gospel Notion of it, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Which is such a Relation, and such a Support of our Faith in Prayer, as mere Nature gives us no Right to, and therefore cannot teach it. We do not now pray to God merely as the Maker and Governor of the World, for we have forfeited our natural Right to his Favour as his Creatures, by making ourselves Sinners: But now he is our Father in Christ, by whom we have received the Adoption, and by this Name we must pray to him, and in this Name alone we may expect to be heard.

Hallowed be thy name: That is, thy Name alone be adored and worshiped by all Mankind; wherein we pray for the Extirpation of all Idolatries, and that God would make himself more universally known to the World, which is to pray for some new Light, for this Sun of Righteousness to visit all the dark Corners of the World: A Light to enlighten the Gentiles, a Light to them that

296 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

fit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death; or, which ſignifies much the ſame Thing, that this Name *Father*, the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and in him our Father, may be known and adored in all the World; that is, that God would make himſelf known in his Son Jeſus Chriſt to all Mankind. This is no Petition which Nature teaches.

Thy kingdom come: That is, the Kingdom of the Meſſias, the Kingdom of Chriſt, by whom God adminiſters all the Affairs in the World: That all Men may ſubmit to his Government, that the Kingdoms of the World may become the Kingdoms of God, and of his Chriſt, and delivered from the Tyranny of wicked Spirits, the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: Let all Things ſucceed and proſper in the Kingdom of thy Chriſt, according to thine own Will and Pleaſure: That thou mayſt have a Church on Earth as obedient to thy Will, as Angels are in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread: If by this Bread we underſtand corporal Bread, for the Support and Suſtenance of our Bodies, and ſo extend this Petition to all temporal Bleſſings, for the Neceſſities and Conveniences of this preſent Life, we muſt then acknowledge this to be a Petition which Nature teaches; and yet as it is circumſtantiated in this Place, it becomes a true Chriſtian Petition.

How Christ enlightens the World. 297

tion. For if by ἐπίστασιον we understand what is necessary for our Support, and by σήμερον the present Time, the Supply of our present Wants, this is a Petition purely Christian, which teaches us to reduce our Desires within the Bounds of the Christian Law, and to live in a constant Dependence on the Providence of God for our daily Supplies. But the antient Fathers understood this of what they called the Super substantial and Supersubstantial Bread, that is, Christ himself, who is that Bread of Life which came down from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the World, who gives us his Flesh to eat, and his Blood to drink. And tho' I know how apt Men are in this Age to despise the most venerable Fathers themselves for what they call mystical Interpretations, yet what our Saviour himself says *John vi.* gives great Countenance to it; *Seek not that meat which perisheth, but that meat which endureth to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give unto you.* And it is so familiar with our Saviour to speak of Bread in this spiritual Sense, that we have reason to think he meant it so in that Petition. We see how Christ preferred this Bread of the Soul; this heavenly Bread which endureth to everlasting Life, before all Corporal Bread. And yet if we understand this Petition of Corporal Bread, there is not any one Petition in this most perfect Form of Christian Prayer and Worship, for the Assistances

298 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

ances of the divine Grace, that spiritual Bread and Food of the Soul. And indeed our Saviour himself seems to expound it thus : For in this very Sermon, after having taught his Disciples this Prayer, he tells them for their Encouragement, *What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Matth vii. 9, 10, 11. Or, as it is in St. Luke, *Will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,* Luke xi. 13. Where our Saviour seems to encourage us to expect that divine and heavenly Bread, which he teaches us to pray for from our heavenly Father, from that Readiness which earthly Parents express in giving earthly Bread to their Children. All which makes it reasonable to think, that our Saviour by this Bread, to which he gives that unusual Name of *ἄρτος*, which we know not well how to translate, did mean this divine and spiritual Bread, not excluding all temporal Blessings.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: Now though I have sufficiently proved, that Forgiveness of Sins is no Article of Natural Religion, yet I cannot say, that Nature itself will not teach Sinners, who are sensible of their Sins,

How Christ enlightens the World. 299

Sins, and either feel or fear the Judgments of God for them, to ask Pardon and Forgiveness of God ; for Men may ask Pardon, without any Promise or Assurance of Pardon ; which was the Case of the King of *Nineveh*, when the Prophet *Jonas* had proclaimed the Destruction of that great City, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed*, he proclaimed a Fast only upon this Hope, *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* But it is certain, the Forgiveness our Saviour teaches us to pray for, is a true evangelical Forgiveness ; that is, that God would forgive us through the Merits and Mediation of Christ, as the Condition for which we are encouraged to pray for Forgiveness is wholly evangelical, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us* ; which is owing to the Gospel-Covenant, not to Nature.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : Which plainly relates to the Kingdom of the Messias, which hath a principal Regard to the Care of Souls, which orders all the Affairs of this Life in Subordination and Subserviency to the Happiness of the next, and restrains the Power of the Devil and evil Spirits, that they shall not be able to tempt and seduce Mankind as they please, much less make too violent Assaults upon the Disciples of Christ, who in their daily Prayers
put

300 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

put themselves under the Protection of God, and their Saviour. This, I think, may satisfy us, how little there is of Nature in the true Christian Worship, and therefore how far Christianity is, either in part or in whole, from being Natural Religion reformed, and restored to its original Perfection.

III. Let us now consider the Laws of Nature, as received into the Body of the Christian Laws, which does not make Christianity a Religion of Nature, as I have already shewn you, tho' it allows of such Laws of Morality and Virtue as Nature teaches. The Truth is, it is not easy in many Cases to know what these Laws of Nature are, nor by what certain Rule to distinguish them from other Laws. The Philosophers differed very much about this Matter, and some Nations have rejected those Laws, which others have thought no less than the Dictates of Nature. But I shall not enter into that Dispute now, but readily grant, that all the Laws of Morality and Virtue, which the ancient Philosophers taught, and which the Reason of Mankind to this Day allows of as necessary Rules and Principles of Life and Manners, are received into the Christian Religion, but not made the adequate Rule of the Christian Life. The Names of these moral Virtues are generally the same, both in Philosophy and Christianity, which makes most Men think that their

How Christ enlightens the World. 301

their Nature and Extent is the same in both: But Christianity, tho' it retains all that is good and commendable in these moral Virtues, yet it corrects their Defects or Excesses, prescribes new Measures, and more divine Attainments to them; as might be proved by a particular Comparifon, of what the Philosophers taught, and what the Gospel teaches concerning these Virtues: To be sure the Gospel gives us a more certain Knowledge, what those Laws are, by which we must live, and a more divine, infallible, positive Authority to them, than mere natural Reason ever did, or ever can give; which, I doubt, is the true Reason, why some Men prefer natural Reason before Revelation, because its Authority is more uncertain and precarious, that they may take and leave what they please, which they cannot do if they own Revelation: But I shall content myself at present only to observe, that those Laws wherein the Perfection of the Christian Life consists, were not taught by Nature, but are peculiar to the Gospel-Revelation; such as those evangelical Degrees and Heights of Charity, Kindness and Beneficence, especially loving Enemies, and forgiving Injuries, which are so far beyond whatever the mere Light of Nature, or mere natural Reason prescribed as necessary and universal Laws to Mankind; and for which no Reasons can be assigned which merely respect the Interest and Concernment
of

302 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

of this present Life, which is the only Concernment of mere natural Laws. These Laws are founded upon the highest Reason, if we respect those divine Patterns of Love and Goodness which we are to imitate, the Patience and Long-suffering of God to Sinners, who causeth the Sun to shine upon the Good and Bad, and his Rain to fall upon the Just and the Unjust; especially his surprizing Love in the Redemption of the World by his own Son, and the Love of our Lord, who offered up himself a willing Sacrifice for the Sins of Men, who, while we were Enemies, died for us, the Just for the Unjust, to reconcile us unto God; and when God has made this our Return for his Love and Goodness, and the Condition of our Forgiveness, on which all our Hope of Heaven depends, this makes it highly reasonable for us to love our Enemies, and forgive the greatest Injuries; but it is not every Reason which makes a Law of Nature, but only such Reasons as immediately result from Nature. And if Man by Nature was an earthly Creature, made to live in this World, the mere Laws of Nature could reach no further than the Concernments of this Life. What it is that would contribute most to the present Happiness of particular Men, and of public Societies, which was the farthest that the Philosophers pretended to reason, and therefore differed as much about the Laws of Virtue, as they did about the

the

How Christ enlightens the World. 303

the chief End and Happiness of Man in this World, which distinguished their several Schools.

And this may satisfy us also concerning several other evangelical Laws, which far exceed what mere Nature ever taught, or can exact from us: Such as Heavenly-mindedness, having our Conversation in Heaven, seeking those Things which are above, not looking to those Things which are seen, which are but temporal, but to those which are not seen, which are eternal; not to seek for that Bread which perisheth, but for that Bread which endureth to everlasting Life; not to lay up for ourselves Treasures on Earth, where Moth and Rust doth corrupt, and Thieves break through and steal, but to lay up for ourselves Treasure in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust do corrupt, and Thieves cannot break through and steal, that where our Treasure is, there our Hearts may be also. And those particular Laws, which in the true Christian Sense of them, are the proper Acts and Exercise of this heavenly Conversation, such as our Saviour recommends to us in his Beatitudes, Poverty of Spirit; Submission to God in a mournful and afflicted Condition, true Christian Meekness and Mercifulness, and Peace-making, which exceed the Measures of mere moral Virtues; a Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, Purity of Heart, to purify ourselves even as God is pure; which
require

304 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

require such Degrees of Mortification and Self-denial, and such an Indifferency to all present Things, as mere Nature could never teach. These are such Laws as wholly respect another World, which nothing but the Promises and Hopes of a spiritual State of Life, of seeing God, and dwelling for ever in his Presence, could make reasonable. This World requires not such divine and heavenly Graces to be standing Rules and Measures of human Conversation ; some lower Degrees of Virtue are better fitted for an easy and happy Life here, in the innocent Enjoyment of present Things ; whereas this divine and heavenly Conversation sets us above this World, and is intended to prepare and dispose us for a quite different State of Life. And therefore if the Laws of an earthly Nature, extend no farther than to such Virtues as fit us to live like reasonable Creatures in this World, (and yet I cannot see how the Laws of Nature can exceed the original State of Nature) then those Laws which wholly concern another World, and a very different State of Life from what the original State of an earthly Nature is, cannot be the mere Laws of Nature. I grant that these Laws are very perfective of human Nature, and some Men think, that all such are natural Laws, which are perfective of Nature ; and so they are, when they are only perfective of Nature in its original State: For Nature may teach us all such Laws, where-
by

How Christ enlightens the World. 305

by we may attain natural Perfection; but such Laws as advance us above the original State of Nature, are as much above Nature too as that State is, and are wholly owing to that divine Wisdom and Goodness which has promised to advance us to that new heavenly State, and trains us up by suitable Laws, and the Exercise of proper Graces and Virtues, for the Enjoyment of it.

This, I hope, may give some Christians a truer Notion of the Christian Religion, and convince Deists and Socinians, how vain all their Talk is about Natural Religion, and how vain their Hopes of Salvation are, but in the Name, and by the meritorious Sacrifice and Intercession, of the only begotten Son of God, whom he hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance unto *Israel*, and Remission of Sins; God open their Eyes to see the Glory of the crucified Jesus, and to adore the Love of God in the Redemption of the World by the Incarnation, Death, and Sufferings, Resurrection, Ascension, and Intercession of his own eternal Son,

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be Honour, Glory, and Power, now and for ever. Amen.

H

S

H

H

tha

and

has

fide

has

led

ind

but

kn

nev

Wa

vid

nev

An

enl



SERMON XV.

How Christ enlightens the World.

LUKE ii. 32.

A light to lighten the Gentiles.

HAVING in the former Sermons upon this Text, shewn you, that Christ is that true Light that enlighteneth the World, and what that new Light is wherewith he has enlightened the World: I shall now consider by what new Ways and Methods he has enlightened the World. For as Knowledge, so Evidence, is Light, which cannot indeed be parted, without destroying both; but yet are of a distinct Consideration. To know what we did not know before, is a new Light in the Understanding; and new Ways of knowing, and new Degrees of Evidence and Certainty, give a new Light, a new Lustre and Brightness to Knowledge: And in this Sense also Christ was a Light to enlighten the Gentiles.

X 2

When

308 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

When he appeared in the World to instruct Mankind, he did not teach them after the Manner of Men, according to the fashionable Mode of the Philosophers of that Age ; but he preached up himself to be the Light of the World, and that they ought to believe in him, and to believe all that he taught them ; and confirmed his own Authority by many great and unquestionable Miracles while he lived, and by his own Resurrection from the Dead. This did not gratify the philosophical Genius of that Age with some new refined Speculations ; and therefore the *Greeks*, who sought after Wisdom, despised all this as Folly : And tho' we have none of these *Greeks* among us now, we have Men exactly of the same Make and Temper, who despise all other Evidence but only natural Proofs and Demonstrations, and will believe no more of the Gospel than natural Reason confirms, which is very little ; nay, to speak strictly and properly of the Gospel Revelation, is nothing at all ; which makes it very absurd and unreasonable to demand such Proofs. For what would they have had him prove by mere natural Reason ? Would they have a natural Proof, that Christ is by Nature the Eternal Son of God, the Eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father ? This is above all Reason and Philosophy, which Nature could not teach, and therefore can be known only by Revelation. Or, would they have him
prove

How Christ enlightens the World. 309

prove by natural Reason and Demonstration, that he came from God to reveal his Will to the World? What would'any Man think of those who would demand such a natural Proof and Demonstration of an Ambassador, that he came with full Authority and Commission from his Prince? The Broad-Seal is the only Proof of that; and that our Saviour had, for Miracles are the Broad-Seal of Heaven. Or, would they have him prove by natural Reason, that he died a Sacrifice for Sin, and that his Death made a perfect Atonement and Expiation for Sin? This, every body knows, must depend upon the Will and Acceptance of God, and therefore no natural Reason can be given for it. The like may be said of his Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, and Intercession for us at the Right-hand of God, which is the Sum of the Gospel Revelation, but what mere natural Reason knows nothing of. And it appears in Fact, that the World did not think they wanted any such natural Proofs: For what a mighty Conquest did the Preaching of the Gospel make! How surprizing and hasty was its Progress! How did it spread itself from East to West! that in a very few Years, by the unwearied Labours and Travels of the Apostles, great Part of the World was enlightened by it. Which is a certain Proof of the great Power and Evidence of Faith, that it enlightens

310 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

those whom mere Reason and Philosophy never could enlighten.

But to make you more sensible of this, and to give check to those Men who admire nothing but mere natural Reason, I shall,

First, shew you what Advantage Faith has above mere natural Reason, in point of Evidence.

Secondly, That this is the shortest and most compendious Way of Teaching.

Thirdly, That it is fitted to the Instruction and Conviction of all Mankind, which proves Christ to be the true Light of the World, not only with respect to the Doctrine which he taught, but to his new Way of teaching.

First, What Advantage Faith hath above mere natural Reason, in point of Evidence. To prove any Thing from natural Reason, is to prove it from such Principles as Nature teaches us; but the last Resolution of a divine Faith is into the Authority of God himself. I believe, for Instance, whatever Christ tells me concerning the Being, and Nature, and Will, and Worship of God; that he himself is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, who perfectly knew the Will of God himself, and came to declare his Will to us: And the Reason why I believe this, is the Evidence of Miracles, that he did such Works as never Man did, such Works as no Creature can do, such

How Christ enlightens the World. 311

such Works as none but God can do. This is the Evidence of Faith, which is much more convincing than mere natural Reason. For let us suppose the Question to be, Whether there be a God? and there are two Ways of proving this, by natural Reason and Philosophy, and by the Principles of Faith: And if natural Reason can prove any thing, it can prove the Being of a God; and I own the Proofs of natural Reason, that there is a God, to be very good: But yet we may consider, whether Reason or Faith gives us the greater and the more undeniable Assurance of this: in both Cases we must reason from the visible Effects to an invisible Cause, and both rely upon the same common Principle, that every Effect must have some Cause. The Philosopher then, suppose, proves the Being of a God from the Creation of the World; a glorious and magnificent Structure, which strikes us with Admiration, and discovers the Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power of the Maker of it. The Believer, without rejecting this natural Proof, proves the Being of a God by Miracles, which is the proper Evidence of Faith. Now one would think that there is a vast difference between these two sorts of Proofs, and that the Advantage lay on Nature's side: For take what Miracles you will, nay, five Thousand Miracles if you please, and what Comparison is there between working a Miracle and making a World? between healing

312 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

the Sick, or giving Sight to the Blind, making the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak, and the Lame to walk, nay raising the Dead, and a whole World of Miracles and Wonders, wherein every thing we see is such a Master-piece of Art, that it is above the Attainment of Creature-Knowledge to discover the admirable Contrivance of it? Now all this is very true; but that is not the Question, Which is the greatest and most admirable Work but, Which gives us the most sensible Demonstration of the Being and Presence of God? Now we see a World, but we do not see how, or when, it was made, or whether it was made at all; and therefore some affirm that it never was made, but that it was from Eternity just as it is now; others, that Matter at least was eternal, and that the World as it is now was formed by a fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, after infinite Trials in infinite Ages; and others think they can prove, that the World is not the Work of Art, but of Chance; because every thing in it is not made as they would have it. All these, I grant, are very absurd and foolish Reasoners; but if Men will reason at this absurd Rate, the visible Frame of Nature cannot cure it. But Miracles leave no room for any of these Pretences; it is seen when they are done, and therefore it is certain they were done; and if they were done, they had a Cause: And yet it is visible that they had no Cause in Nature, for they are
against

How Christ enlightens the World. 313

against and above the standing Laws of Nature. Nor had they any human Cause; for every Man feels in himself, that he has no Power to do such Things; and therefore they must have a divine Cause, a Cause superior to Nature, which can reverse its Laws, and act without it: which proves that there is an invisible Being which governs Nature, and is the Lord of it; that is, that there is a God. Man may see the Works of God, as great and as wonderful as they are, and not own his Being, Power, or Providence, which we have too many sad Examples of; but the visible Signs of God's Power and Presence, in great and unquestionable Miracles, will extort from them the Confession of some superior invisible Power. And therefore those who teach that the World may be without a Cause, or be made without a God, do not pretend this of Miracles; which is a plain Confession, that they can give no account of Miracles without a God; and will not believe that there ever were any Miracles, to avoid the Necessity of believing a God. For it is certain Miracles have a Cause, and a free and voluntary Cause too, because they are done at the Word of Command; and it is as certain, that when a mere Man speaks the Word, he has no Power to do the Miracle; and therefore there must be an invisible Cause that commands Nature, and gives Laws to it. So that tho' God be knowable by the
Light

314 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Light of Nature, and the Works of Creation, which *Socinus* very absurdly denied, yet the Proofs and Arguments of Faith give us a much more certain Knowledge of God than mere Nature, at least, than this corrupt and degenerate State of Nature, can do. That which proves a divine Revelation, must prove that there is a God who inspires the Prophet, and reveals his Will by him to the World.

Thus tho' there are very good natural Reasons to prove that God made the World, yet the Testimony of *Moses*, an inspired Writer, That *in the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*, is a much better Evidence than all other Arguments: And here *St. Peter* lays the Proof of the Creation, *By Faith we now that the world was made*. Some reject all the natural Proofs of the Creation; others are doubtful about it; but no Man that believes the History of *Moses*, wants any other Proof. The like may be said of Providence, in God's Government of the World; nothing can give us such a firm Assurance of this, as a Revelation: For when God tells us, that he governs the World, that puts an end to all Disputes.

The essential Difference between moral Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, has the Suffrage and Authority of natural Reason; but all these Reasons put together cannot give us such a Certainty of this, as an
express

How Christ enlightens the World. 315

express divine Law, which prescribes the Rules of Life; what we are to do, and what we must not do, as we expect the Favour, or fear the Vengeance of God. And will any Man pretend, that the natural Proofs of Immortality carry such Evidence and Authority with them, as the express Promises of immortal Life, and the visible Proof of it in the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead?

These are the chief Principles of what some Men call Natural Religion, and are in some measure knowable from the Light of Nature; but that is at best so imperfect and obscure a Light, that had Christ intended no more (as some Men think he did intend no more) than to instruct us in those natural Principles of Religion and Virtue; yet a supernatural Light, a divine Revelation, and divine Authority, was necessary to enlighten and instruct the World, and to put an end to all Disputes and Doubts even in such Matters. And how much soever Men value and admire Reason, I cannot imagine why they should quarrel at the greater Evidence of Faith.

For, 1. Tho' Faith gives us a new and more certain Evidence than mere natural Reason, yet it leaves us all the Evidence and Certainty that Reason can give us. It does not require us to reject the Evidence of Reason for Revelation; but we may prove the Being and Providence of God, the Differences of

316 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Good and Evil, and the Rewards and Punishments of the next Life, from the Principles of natural Reason still ; and whatever Force and Strength these Reasons would have, without Revelation, they have at least as much with it. What Cause have they then to complain, when Revelation does not deny them the Use of their Reason, in such Things as are knowable by Reason but leaves them all that ever they had ? Is it any Injury to natural Reason, that Faith teaches the same Things more perfectly, and gives greater Certainty and Authority to them, than mere natural Reason can do ? Did ever any Man before quarrel at the rising Sun, because it gives a clearer, and brighter, and more distinguishing Light, than his Candle ? To quarrel at new Degrees of Evidence, when we have all our old Evidence left us as perfect as ever it was, is very unaccountable, unless Men think they can ever be too sure in Matters of such vast Consequence as Religion is.

For, 2. Faith is so far from injuring natural Reason, as to such Matters as are knowable by Reason, that it is the highest Improvement of it. It teaches indeed no new Philosophy, yet it makes Men the best and wisest Philosophers, and teaches them to reason right. When we learn by Revelation, without the Help of natural Reason, and with greater Certainty than mere natural Reason can give
us,

How Christ enlightens the World. 317

us, that there is a God, who is the Maker, and Governor of the World; and the Differences of Good and Evil; and that good Men shall be rewarded, and the Wicked punished, in the next Life; we shall easily discover how agreeable all this is to the Reason of Mankind. And when we know the Truth of these Things, we shall reason more sensibly about them, and find so many plain and evident Marks and Characters of them in Nature, as to wonder that Mankind should ever be ignorant of such plain Truths: For it is much easier to find out the Agreeableness and Correspondence of such known Truths to the Nature of Things, than at first to discover what is true or false by the mere Light of Nature. A true Faith is the surest Foundation of a sound and solid Philosophy, which was not to be found in the Heathen World. Reason is never so glorious, as when it is enlightened by Faith; and then it appears clear and bright as the Sun: Which deceives some Men into such an undue Veneration for it, as to think that there was no Need of a Revelation, and that it more becomes a reasonable Creature to hearken to the Dictates of Reason, which is their natural Rule and Guide. And those who upon these Pretences reject all Revelation, and trust wholly to natural Reason, find themselves as weak and feeble again, as *Sampson* was when his Locks were cut off: when they cease to be Christians,

318 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

ans, and turn mere Philosophers, they soon fall into the Errors, Folly, Uncertainty, and Scepticism of Philosophers; that if Men value their Reason, and would improve it to the best Advantage, they must take care to secure their Faith, which teaches the best Reason, and gives the greatest Clearness and Certainty to it: So that even as to those Principles of Religion, which may in some Measure be known by the Light of Nature, the Evidence and Certainty of Faith vastly exceeds that of mere natural Reason.

But, besides this, Faith does not only discover to us, but gives us Assurance and Certainty of, such Things, as Nature knew nothing of; and as natural Reason, even when they are revealed, can give us no certain account of: So that this is perfectly a new Light, wherewith Christ has enlightened the World; and these Things are no less than the whole Mystery of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, which are those Things which *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard; neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive:* that is, such Things, which we never had, nor could have, any natural Knowledge of. For they are the free Result of the divine Wisdom and Counsel, for the Salvation of Sinners; and depend wholly upon the Good-will and Pleasure of God, and therefore could never be known till God revealed them. But then we have as certain Evidence of all this, from the Miracles

How Christ enlightens the World. 319

Miracles which our Saviour wrought, as we have for the plainest Principles in natural Religion : For Miracles equally prove whatever the Person, who works these Miracles, teaches us in God's Name. Whether such Things can be proved by Reason, or not, makes no Difference ; Miracles prove a divine Revelation, and all Parts of the Revelation are equally certain, and must be equally believed. It is no reasonable Objection against such new Revelations, that we knew nothing of them before ; that the Works of Nature gave us no Intimation of any such Thing ; for what have the Works of Nature to do with the secret Counsels and Purposes of God ? And if God think fit to bestow any supernatural Grace and Favour on Mankind, this can never be known till God reveal it ; and there can be no other Evidence for such a Revelation, but the Testimony of a divine and supernatural Power ; and where we see this Seal of Miracles, we know it to be the Will and Pleasure of God.

But yet God had so much regard to give all reasonable Satisfaction to Mankind, that, since Nature could not give us the least Intimation of these great Mysteries, of the Incarnation, Sufferings, and Death of the Son of God, he gave early and repeated Notices of his gracious Design, to send the Messiah into the World, to redeem, and to save his People, and instituted the whole Jewish Worship, the Tabernacle,

320 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

cle, and Temple, Priests and Sacrifices, as so many Types, and Figures, and artificial Representations and Ideas of the Incarnation, and Priesthood, and Sacrifice of his Son; and described his Person, and the Time of his Appearance; the Manner of his Birth, the Circumstances and the Expiation of his Death, the Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven, and the glorious Success of his Kingdom, in the Prediction of antient Prophets, which gave an undeniable Confirmation to the Truth of the Gospel, when the Appearance of Christ in the World, and what he did and suffered, was manifestly the Accomplishment of all the Promises, Types, and Figures, and Prophecies of the old Law, for so many Generations. This is greater Evidence of the Truth and Certainty of the Gospel Revelation, than any that natural Reason could have given us; and gives us a better Understanding of these great Gospel Mysteries, than any natural Ideas and Notions can give us: But this is not my Business at present; what I have now said is sufficient to shew, what Advantage Faith has above mere natural Reason, in point of Evidence, which makes it a more perfect and glorious Light.

Secondly, As Faith has the Advantage of natural Reason in point of Evidence, so it is a shorter and more compendious Way of teach-

How Christ enlightens the World. 321

teaching. This was absolutely necessary at the first Preaching the Gospel, which could never have spread itself so suddenly all over the World, by any other Means. Had the Apostles taught Men like Philosophers, and disputed every particular Article of Faith by the Principles and Conclusions of natural Reason, if any Man could have been converted to Christianity in this Way, which there is great Reason to doubt, yet the Progress of the Gospel must have been very slow, and it would have required some Ages to have planted a Christian Church in the World: But Faith enlightens all at once, like the Sun, which in a Moment darts its Beams from East to West. There is but one Principle into which the whole Christian Faith is resolved, and but one plain and easy Proof of that Principle; the Principle is, that great fundamental Doctrine, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Proof is, those great and mighty Works which he did, in Confirmation of this Faith, which were the Accomplishment of the ancient Prophecies concerning him. This is seen, and known, and believed in an instant, as was evident on the Day of Pentecost; when the miraculous Effusion of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, as soon as St. Peter had explained the Meaning of it, converted Three thousand at once: And the Sum of his Sermon was this, *Therefore let all the house of*

322 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36. This is that Faith which denominates us Christians, and is very quickly learned, and upon the Profession of this Faith, Men were baptized, and received into the Communion of Christ's Church: Not that this was the only Thing, which Christians are explicitly to believe, that Jesus is the Christ, that Messias whom God had promised to send into the World; but because it contains the whole Reason of the Christian Faith. When Men are heartily persuaded of the Truth of this, they have nothing else to do, but to learn of him. What he teaches us, is the Rule of our Faith; and that he teaches it, is the only Reason of it, the only Foundation of a true Christian Faith. The only Thing in the Christian Religion that wanted a Proof, is, That Jesus Christ is the only Son of the living God; when this is proved, every Thing else is proved by it, for there needs no other Proof of what Christ taught, but that he taught it. And therefore this was the Office of the Apostles, not to dispute Men into the Faith, but to be Witnesses of such Things as they had both seen and heard; and principally to be Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ, which was the last and great Proof which he gave of his being the Christ. This is a very easy and compendious Way of teaching, when there
there

How Christ enlightens the World. 323

there is but one Thing to be proved, and the Proof that does not depend upon abstruse and perplexed Reasonings, but upon plain Matter of Fact, which is seen by its own Light. This is a, mighty Advantage to the World, that the Way to Heaven is not only so plain and certain, but so quickly and easily learned, that it takes up no great Time to be made a Christian. Some Men have not much Time to spare, in curious Inquiries, and others will not be at the Pains of it; but when it is no more trouble but to open our Eyes and see the Light, nay, when all the Difficulty is on the other Side, to shut our Eyes against the Light, as this makes Infidelity very inexcusable, so it recommends the Love and Goodness of God in sending such a Light into the World, as offers itself to us, without our seeking for it; is seen without Labour, and shews us every Thing else by its own Light.

Thirdly, The Evidence of Faith is best fitted for the Instruction and Conviction of all Mankind. Whatever the Light of Reason and Nature be, it is very manifest that the Capacities and Understandings of Men are of a very different Size and Make. Some can hardly reason at all, cannot understand the plainest and easiest Consequences: others, who agree in some common Principles, yet differ vastly in the Conclusion. This divided the World into so many Sects of Philosophers,

324 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

all zealous for their several Schools, and this was the State of the World when Christ appeared in it, and sent his Apostles abroad to preach the Gospel to all Nations. Now how unlikely was it, in such a State of Things, that mere Reason should reform the World? Christ came a Light into the World, to enlighten all the dark Corners of it, and therefore must instruct in such a Manner, as is fitted to the Capacities and Understandings of all Men; the Learned and the Ignorant, the Wise and the Unwise, the Philosopher and the Ploughman; for that is not the Light of the World, which cannot enlighten all Men without Distinction, as the Sun does; and I know no such Light as this, but the Light of the Gospel. For is there any Thing which all Mankind believe, and so universally agree in, as the Authority of Miracles? Nothing can be stronger and more self-evident than the Reason of the blind Man, whose Eyes Jesus had opened: When the Pharisees told him, *We know God spake unto Moses: but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.* The man answered and said unto them, *herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.* Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of a man that was born blind. If this
man

How Christ enlightens the World. 325

*man were not of God, he could do nothing, John ix. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. For can any thing be more reasonable and necessary, than to believe him who comes from God? Or can there be an easier Way of learning, than to be taught what to believe, and what to practise, by an inspired Person, whose Authority alone is greater than all the Reason in the World? The lowest and meanest Capacities are always to be considered in general Instructions, and that which will teach the most Ignorant, will teach the Wise, if they please to learn. If the most rude and barbarous People can see the Force of such Evidence, others are inexcusable if they will not see it. It had been a great Diminution to the Goodness of God, and his universal Care of Mankind, had he fitted the Gospel only to the Understandings of Philosophers, and Men of improved and exercised Reason: But *such an high-way, where way-faring men, though fools, shall not err*, Isaiah xxxv. 8. is certainly plain and broad enough for all Mankind; and if Fools will go right, and the Wise and Learned will shut their Eyes and go wrong, let them look to that. Indeed St. Paul observes, that God by the Preaching of the Gospel hath put a Scorn upon all the Wisdom of the World, and hath made it appear, That *the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that nat-**

324 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

all zealous for their several Schools, and this was the State of the World when Christ appeared in it, and sent his Apostles abroad to preach the Gospel to all Nations. Now how unlikely was it, in such a State of Things, that mere Reason should reform the World? Christ came a Light into the World, to enlighten all the dark Corners of it, and therefore must instruct in such a Manner, as is fitted to the Capacities and Understandings of all Men; the Learned and the Ignorant, the Wise and the Unwise, the Philosopher and the Ploughman; for that is not the Light of the World, which cannot enlighten all Men without Distinction, as the Sun does; and I know no such Light as this, but the Light of the Gospel. For is there any Thing which all Mankind believe, and so universally agree in, as the Authority of Miracles? Nothing can be stronger and more self-evident than the Reason of the blind Man, whose Eyes Jesus had opened: When the Pharisees told him, *We know God spake unto Moses: but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.* The man answered and said unto them, *herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.* Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of a man that was born blind. If this
man

How Christ enlightens the World. 325

man were not of God, he could do nothing, John ix. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. For can any thing be more reasonable and necessary, than to believe him who comes from God? Or can there be an easier Way of learning, than to be taught what to believe, and what to practise, by an inspired Person, whose Authority alone is greater than all the Reason in the World? The lowest and meanest Capacities are always to be considered in general Instructions, and that which will teach the most Ignorant, will teach the Wise, if they please to learn. If the most rude and barbarous People can see the Force of such Evidence, others are inexcusable if they will not see it. It had been a great Diminution to the Goodness of God, and his universal Care of Mankind, had he fitted the Gospel only to the Understandings of Philosophers, and Men of improved and exercised Reason: But *such an high-way, where way-faring men, though fools, shall not err,* Isaiah xxxv. 8. is certainly plain and broad enough for all Mankind; and if Fools will go right, and the Wise and Learned will shut their Eyes and go wrong, let them look to that. Indeed St. Paul observes, that God by the Preaching of the Gospel hath put a Scorn upon all the Wisdom of the World, and hath made it appear, That *the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that nat-*

326 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. For God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound the things that are mighty: And the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, hath God chosen; nay, the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 25, &c.

Thus I have shewn you how Christ, this divine and heavenly Light, hath enlightened the World; both with respect to those new Revelations he has made to us of the Will of God, and that Evidence he has given us, and what Advantage the Evidence of Faith has for enlightening the World, above all that mere natural Reason can pretend to.

But, *Thirdly*, there is another Thing as considerable as all the rest, and that is, that internal Light, wherewith Christ enlightens all his sincere Disciples, I mean the Light of the Holy Spirit, which he has bestowed on the Christian Church. This we have frequent Mention of in the Gospels and Epistles. *St. Paul* is very express in it, where he tells the *Ephesians*, That he ceased not to make mention of them in his prayers. That the God of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and

reve-

How Christ enlightens the World. 327

revelation in the knowledge of him : The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power ; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, Ephes. i. 16, &c.

The Illumination of the Holy Spirit is not to teach us any new Faith, for we are bound to receive no other Faith, but what Christ and his Apostles have already taught ; but to give us a clear and distinct Knowledge of what is revealed, and to make such a strong and lively Impression of these supernatural Truths upon our Minds, as exceeds the Evidence of mere natural Reason. It must be confessed that we want clear and distinct Ideas of supernatural Truths, and this the Men of Reason complain of, for they cannot believe nor understand without clear Ideas ; but yet, as I have already observed, the Scriptures have given us artificial Ideas of such Things as Nature cannot teach, whereby we can understand what we are to believe, and can form some sensible Notion of it. And when we do believe and beg the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, rightly to understand and to comprehend this Faith, he gives such a new Brightness and Lustre to it, as creates an Assurance beyond all the Powers of mere Reason.

328 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

This divine Light darted into our Minds, abundantly supplies the Want of all natural Ideas, and enables us to see clear without them. This makes Christ the most perfect and glorious Light, that he does not only give us new Objects and new Evidence, but by his Holy Spirit gives us also new Eyes to see with.

For a Conclusion of the Whole, we may hence learn the true Cause of the Decays of the Christian Faith in the World, and by what Means it may be revived again. Christianity was propagated in the World by the proper Arguments of Faith; that is, by the Authority of Revelation, and the Evidence of Miracles; and while it stood upon this Bottom, it made glorious Conquests. But since Christians are become Philosophers, and think it a mean account to give of their Faith, that they believe because it is revealed, and that Revelation confirmed by unquestionable Miracles, unless they can prove every Article of their Faith by the Principles of natural Reason, or at least reconcile it with their Reason and Philosophy, we see the Case is much altered, and instead of making new Conquests, Christianity loses Ground; or gets and loses as it happens, as other Sects of Philosophers used to do; and this cannot be avoided, while we put the Cause of Christianity upon so doubtful an Issue: For all the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity, the whole Mystery of
our

How Christ enlightens the World. 329

our Redemption by Jesus Christ, as it could not be known, so it cannot be proved by natural Reason. And those other Principles which are knowable by the Light of Nature, are more certainly known by Revelation, as I have already shewn. This is what St. Paul condemned and rejected long since, as foreseeing of what ill Consequence it would prove to the Gospel of Christ: He declares to the *Corinthians*, that *Christ sent him to preach, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*, 1 Cor. i. 17. Chap. ii. 4, 5. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* And, therefore, tho' 'tis evident, that St. Paul was not unacquainted with the *Greek Philosophy*, yet he would not mix Christianity and Philosophy together, but preached the Faith of Christ in its natural Simplicity, and proved it by its proper Arguments, the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, that is, by those mighty Works which were wrought by the Holy Spirit, for the Confirmation of it.

If then we would secure our own Faith, or defend the Christian Faith against Atheists, Infidels, and Hereticks, let us adhere firmly to the Authority of Revelation, and trust to no other Evidence. Natural Reason in many
Cases

330 *How Christ enlightens the World.*

Cases may be of excellent Use, not only against Atheists and Infidels, but against Heriticks, who, after all their Pretences to Reason, have Reason no more on their Side than they have Revelation ; but the surest Way to prevail, is by the proper Weapons and Arguments of Faith: These at first conquered the World, and these must still preserve the Christian Faith where it is, and restore it where it is lost.

To conclude, let us bless this God who has sent this Day-spring from on high to visit us, and let us walk worthy of the Light, as it becomes the Children of the Light and of the Day: that this may never be our Condemnation, That Light is come into the World, and we have loved Darkness rather than Light because our Deeds are evil.



SERMON XVI.

The Evidence of Faith without Sight.

J O H N XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

WHEN Jesus was risen from the Dead, he appeared unto his Apostles, and by shewing them his Hands and his Feet, satisfied them of the Truth and Reality of his Resurrection; but *Thomas*, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Christ appeared to the rest of the Apostles; and tho' they all assured him that they had seen the Lord, he would not believe, unless he also saw him; he said, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* Eight Days after Jesus appeared to them again,
I
when

332 *The Evidence of Faith*

when *Thomas* was present, and offers him the Satisfaction he demanded; *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be no more faithless, but believing:* And this made him profess his Faith in Christ, and cry out, *My Lord, and my God.* But tho' this cured *Thomas's* Infidelity, yet our Saviour reproves him for his obstinate refusing to believe, unless he saw him; which is such Evidence as all Christians could not have, and is more than is absolutely necessary to Faith. It was fitting, that the Apostles, who were to be Witnesses of his Resurrection, should see him after he was risen; for they could not be his Witnesses, that he was risen, if they had not seen him; but yet *Thomas* might have believed, that he was risen, upon the Testimony of the other Apostles, who had seen him, before he had seen him himself, as all the Christian World ever since have believed without seeing: And therefore it abated of the Merit of his Faith, that he was so difficult to believe, and demanded such Evidence, as Christ thought fit to give him, because he was to be one of the Witnesses of his Resurrection; but yet, which he gave to very few, and requires us to believe without: *Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.* In which Words our Saviour teaches, that there is sufficient Evidence

dence for our Faith without seeing, and that it will not excuse any Man's Infidelity, that he did not see Christ after he was risen from the Dead. And yet we have great Numbers in our Age of *Thomas's* Mind, who will not believe, unless they see; who attribute their Infidelity to want of Evidence, and laugh at the Easiness and Credulity of those, who can believe Stories of what was done Seventeen Hundred Years ago, which they never saw themselves, but have only by Report: Especially when so much depends upon it, that they must deny themselves the present Pleasures and Satisfactions of Life, for the Hope and Expectation of such unseen Things: Which makes it very necessary to shew the Unreasonableness of such Pretences, and to justify the Faith of Christians, in believing the Resurrection of Christ without seeing. And in order to this, I shall,

First, Shew you, that Faith is never resolved into mere Sight, and therefore the Evidence of Sight is not essential to Faith.

Secondly, That there may be sufficient Evidence, whereon to found a reasonable Faith, without Sight.

Thirdly, That we have such Evidence for the Resurrection of our Saviour, tho' we have not seen him.

First,

332 *The Evidence of Faith*

when *Thomas* was present, and offers him the Satisfaction he demanded; *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my bands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be no more faithless, but believing:* And this made him profess his Faith in Christ, and cry out, *My Lord, and my God.* But tho' this cured *Thomas's* Infidelity, yet our Saviour reproves him for his obstinate refusing to believe, unless he saw him; which is such Evidence as all Christians could not have, and is more than is absolutely necessary to Faith. It was fitting, that the Apostles, who were to be Witnesses of his Resurrection, should see him after he was risen; for they could not be his Witnesses, that he was risen, if they had not seen him; but yet *Thomas* might have believed, that he was risen, upon the Testimony of the other Apostles, who had seen him, before he had seen him himself, as all the Christian World ever since have believed without seeing: And therefore it abated of the Merit of his Faith, that he was so difficult to believe, and demanded such Evidence, as Christ thought fit to give him, because he was to be one of the Witnesses of his Resurrection; but yet, which he gave to very few, and requires us to believe without: *Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.* In which Words our Saviour teaches, that there is sufficient Evidence

dence for our Faith without seeing, and that it will not excuse any Man's Infidelity, that he did not see Christ after he was risen from the Dead. And yet we have great Numbers in our Age of *Thomas's* Mind, who will not believe, unless they see; who attribute their Infidelity to want of Evidence, and laugh at the Easiness and Credulity of those, who can believe Stories of what was done Seventeen Hundred Years ago, which they never saw themselves, but have only by Report: Especially when so much depends upon it, that they must deny themselves the present Pleasures and Satisfactions of Life, for the Hope and Expectation of such unseen Things: Which makes it very necessary to shew the Unreasonableness of such Pretences, and to justify the Faith of Christians, in believing the Resurrection of Christ without seeing. And in order to this, I shall,

First, Shew you, that Faith is never resolved into mere Sight, and therefore the Evidence of Sight is not essential to Faith.

Secondly, That there may be sufficient Evidence, whereon to found a reasonable Faith, without Sight.

Thirdly, That we have such Evidence for the Resurrection of our Saviour, tho' we have not seen him.

First,

334 *The Evidence of Faith*

First, That Faith is never resolved into mere Sight, and therefore the Evidence of Sight is not essential to Faith. There is no great Need of proving this; for Faith and Sight are opposed in Scripture as two distinct Principles; *we walk by faith, and not by sight*: And the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 5. Now it is impossible to have the Evidence of Sight for unseen Things.

But that you may the more distinctly apprehend this, we must distinguish between the Objects of Faith, the Evidence of Faith, or the Reasons and Motives of Believing, and the Means whereby this Evidence is conveyed to us.

As for the *first*, the Objects of Faith are all invisible; as, that there is a God and another World, that our Souls shall survive our Bodies, and be rewarded or punished according to our Works; that our Bodies shall rise out of their Graves at the last Day, and all Mankind be summoned to Judgment; that Christ is the eternal Son of God, that Messiah whom God had promised to send into the World, that he revealed the Will of God to us, that he died to expiate our Sins, that he was raised from the Dead, by the Power of God, to be the Lord and Judge both of Quick and Dead, that he ascended into Heaven, and sits at the
Right-

Right-hand of God, and intercedes for us with his Father, and shall visibly come again at the last Day to judge the World. These, I say, are all invisible Things, and if we will not believe, till we see, we must be always Infidels; for tho' the Person of Christ, and what he did and suffered, was visible, while he was upon Earth, yet it could not be seen with mere Eyes of Flesh, that he was the eternal Son and Messias of God; for then all, who saw him, must have believed on him: His Death was visible to those who were present, but the Expiation of his Death was not visible: The Resurrection of Christ might indeed have been seen, if God had so pleased, but yet no Man did see him rise again from the Dead, tho' his Disciples saw him after he was risen: However, no Man could see by what Power he was raised, nor for what End; which is the principal Object of our Faith; his Disciples saw him ascend towards Heaven, and received by a Cloud out of their Sight; but their Eyes could not follow him into Heaven, nor see him sit down at God's Right-hand. We shall indeed all see him, when he comes to Judgment; but in the mean Time we must believe in him without seeing. So that all the Objects of Faith always were, and always will be invisible to us in this World; and the Apostles themselves, who conversed with Christ on Earth, had no Advantage of us upon this Account; for tho' they

they saw the Person of Christ, whom we never saw, yet when they believed him to be the Christ the Son of God, they believed what they did not see any more than we; and if not seeing be an Objection against the Objects of Faith, it always was, and always will be, an Objection; but then it proves too much, that Faith itself was always a very absurd Principle; for if it be absurd to believe what we do not see, it is absurd to believe at all; for, if we do believe, we must believe unseen Things, since all the Objects of Faith are invisible.

2. As the Objects of Faith are invisible, so the Evidence of Faith, or the Reason and Motives of Believing, are invisible also, (*i.e.*) are not the Objects of Sight, but of Reason and Discourse.

A divine Faith is ultimately resolved into the Authority of God; for such Things as neither our Senses nor natural Reason can inform us of, can be known only by Revelation; but the Authority of God is no more visible to our Eyes, than God himself is; how then shall we know whether that Person who pretends to come to us from God, and to reveal his Will to us, were really sent by God? Now, to assure us of this, God must give Testimony to such a Person by some divine and visible Effects, such as Prophecy or Miracles; for no Man can foretel Things to
come,

come, but by the Spirit of God ; nor work Miracles, unless God be with him. Well, you'll say, then Faith is at last resolved into Sense, for Prophecies and Miracles must be known by Sense ; when we hear a Man foretel what shall be, and the Event exactly answers the Prediction ; or, we see a Man work Miracles, as *Moses*, and Christ, and his Apostles did, great and unquestionable Miracles ; this is all Matter of Sense : Now it is true, both the Prophecy and the Miracle must be known by Sense ; but yet the Evidence of Faith is not resolved into Sense, as a few Words may satisfy any Man ; for then all who see the Miracles, or hear the Prophecy, and see the Accomplishment of it, must be true Believers ; but Experience proves this is not so ; and therefore there is something more required to work Faith in us, than to see a Miracle. *Pharoah* saw all the Miracles which *Moses* wrought in *Egypt* ; but yet he would not believe, nor obey the Voice of the Lord to let *Israel* go : The Children of *Israel* saw all the Miracles in *Egypt*, the *Red-sea*, and the Wilderness, but yet would not believe God and his Servant *Moses*, but frequently murmured and rebelled : The Scribes and Pharisees saw the Miracles that our Saviour wrought, but would never own him for their Messias ; but conspired against him to take away his Life ; nay, it is more than probable, that they were convinced by the Story that

the Soldiers told, that he was indeed risen from the Dead, and yet instead of repenting of their Sin, and believing on him, they endeavoured to stifle the Report, and hired the Soldiers to say, that *while they slept, his disciples came and stole him away.*

This proves, beyond all Contradiction, that the Evidence of Faith is not resolved into Sight; for then the whole Jewish Nation, who saw the Miracles of Christ, must have believed on him; and yet, we know, very few of them believe. Sight discovers what it is that is done, as that the Sick are restored to Health, the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Deaf hear, the Dumb speak, the Dead are raised; but it is Reason that discovers the Nature of what is done, and the End of doing it; which makes it a divine Testimony to the Person, who does it.

Sight proves nothing more, but that such a wonderful Thing was done; but if you would improve this into a divine Testimony, there are a great many Things to be considered, which belong to Reason, not to Sense.

As for Instance; suppose we had been present when our Saviour raised *Lazarus* from the Dead, after he had been buried four Days; our Eyes would have satisfied us, that the dead Man was restored to Life, and this is all our Eyes could tell us: But then our Reason takes this Matter of Fact, that Christ had raised *Lazarus* from the Dead, and from
hence

hence proves, that he came from God, and reveals the Will of God to us; for, as the blind Man argued, *No man can do such things, unless God be with him*; and God cannot give Testimony to an Impostor, which is contrary to the natural Notions we have of God's Veracity. But this is not the Effect of Sight, but of Reason and Discourse; and therefore whatever wonderful Things Men see, if they still resolve to reason perversely, they may be Infidels after all. Thus the *Jews* did; they attributed the Miracles of our Saviour, not to God, but to the Devil, *He casts out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils*, and entertained a great many unreasonable Prejudices against his Person, the Place of his Birth, the Meanness of his Appearance, and such like Cavils, as made all his Miracles ineffectual to persuade them, that he was the Messiah.

III. And therefore the Evidence of Sense concerns only the Matter of Fact, or the Way and Means of conveying the Knowledge of this Matter of Fact to us; that is, whether there were such a Person as Christ, whether he taught such Doctrines, and wrought such Miracles, as are reported of him. Now we must acknowledge, that Sense is one Way and the most certain Way of doing this; but it is not the only Way; the Report of Eye and Ear-Witnesses, or authentic and undoubted Re-

cords and Histories will inform us of such Matters, as we did not see ourselves, and it may be, were done many hundred Years before we were born; and this is the only Difference there is in the Faith of the several Ages of the Church. Those, who lived in our Saviour's Days, and attended on him, heard his Sermons themselves, and saw his Miracles: Those, who lived in the Apostles Days, had the Testimony of Eye and Ear-witnesses: Those, who lived in After-ages, even till our Days, have the Writings of the Apostles, and the universal Belief of all Ages, to assure them of the Truth of such Matters. This indeed makes some Difference, but no such Difference as can justify Infidelity: For since Sight is not essential to Faith, Men may believe without seeing; especially since we may have sufficient Evidence of the Truth of such Matters of Fact, as are a necessary Foundation for Faith, without seeing such Things done ourselves.

Secondly, And this brings me to the second Thing, That there may be sufficient Evidence, whereon to found a reasonable Faith, without Sight; that is, that in many Cases there may be and is sufficient Reason to believe such Things, as we never saw. And will any Man deny this? Does not every Man in the World do it? Does any Man of Sense and Understanding deny the Testimony

of Eye and Ear-witnesses? Especially when there are great Numbers of them, and all the Reason in the World to believe, that they give an honest Testimony. Are not the Lives and Fortunes of Men determined every Day by such Evidence? Has any Man, who was never out of *England*, any other Reason to believe, that there are such Countries as *France*, and *Spain*, and *Italy*? Will any Man of Understanding reject the Credit of all History? Does any Man doubt, whether there were such Persons as *Alexander* and *Julius Caesar*? Do we not believe many Things upon the Authority of credible Histories, as firmly as if we had seen them ourselves? And as for Matters of Religion, this is plain beyond all Dispute: The *Jews*, who lived in the Times of *Moses*, and saw the Miracles he wrought, did very often disbelieve, murmur, and rebel; but in all After-ages the *Jews* believed *Moses*, and had his Authority in the greatest Veneration, tho' they never saw any of his Miracles, but only had the History of them preserved in his Writings: And thus we see it has been in all Ages of the Christian Church; those who never saw any of our Saviour's Miracles, nor his Apostles, have yet as firmly believed them as those who did; which is a manifest Indication, what Mankind thinks a reasonable Evidence; that there may be such credible Records of what was done many Ages since, as

is a sufficient Reason to believe such Things as we never saw.

And indeed, if this were not so, God could not make a standing Revelation of his Will to the World: There must have been new Prophets in every Age to instruct Mankind, and new Miracles wrought in every Age to give Credit to those new Prophets. It had not been sufficient for Christ to have died once at *Jerusalem*, but he must have appeared in every Age, and died and risen again in every Age; since what he did in one Age, would not serve for another; and by the same Reason, it was not sufficient for him to live, and die, and rise again in one Place, but he must have done this in all Parts of the World, if he would have the whole World believe in him; which are such palpable Absurdities, as, methinks, should make those Men ashamed, who will allow of no other certain Evidence, but only Sense; that is, who will believe no body but their own Eyes and Ears.

I must grant, that our own Senses carry the most irresistible Evidence with them; for we must believe what we see, and that we hear what we hear: But yet upon the whole Matter we have no Reason to complain, that we did not live in our Saviour's Days, to see his Miracles, and to hear his Sermons; for this does not make Faith in Christ to be more difficult to us, than it was to them: For tho'
Sense

Sense gives us a more certain and irresistible Evidence than any other Testimony, yet this Defect is supplied by Education; we are taught to believe these Things in our Infancy, and that grows up into Nature, and when we come to use our Reason in these Matters, we find Evidence enough, and Education prepares us to receive a reasonable Satisfaction, tho' it be not irresistible: And when we believe the History of our Saviour, we have no Prejudices to hinder our believing him to be the Messias and the Son of God, as he declared himself to be. But the *Jews*, who lived in our Saviour's Days, tho' they had greater Assurance than we have, that there was such a Man, and that he wrought such Miracles, because they saw him, and saw the Miracles which he wrought, yet it was much harder to them to believe him to be the Christ, because they laboured under great Prejudices, which hindered their believing on him.

I make no doubt at all, but that those Men, who are Infidels now, would have been Infidels, tho' they had lived in our Saviour's Days. Now they pretend they would have believed in Christ, had they seen him do those Miracles, which are reported of him; but had they seen him do those Miracles, then they would have questioned, as the *Jews* did, by what Power he did them; and have found out as reasonable Objections against his work-

ing Miracles by the Power of God, as they now do against the Truth and Certainty of the History of the Gospel. For the Evidence of Faith is at last resolved into Reason and Discourse, and those who reason perversely in one Case will do so in another ; especially, when such perverse Reasonings are manifestly owing to an Unwillingness to believe ; and that this is the Case of too many, there needs no other Proof, but that they reject such Evidence in Matters of Faith, as they allow without Dispute in other Cases ; and to shew the Unreasonableness of these Men's Unbelief, and to confirm our own Faith, I proceed,

Thirdly, To shew, that we have abundant Evidence of the Resurrection of our Saviour to be a firm Foundation of Faith, tho' we did not see him die, nor rise from the Dead. Now this Evidence depends upon Testimony, which I shall represent plainly and briefly to you,

We are assured then, that Christ is risen from the Dead, by the Testimony of those Men who saw him, and ate and drank with him after his Resurrection ; who, if they say true, had as great assurance, that he was indeed risen, as we can possibly have of those Things which we see and handle. And the Witnesses of this are not one or two melancholy Men, who might be imposed on by some cunning Cheat, but a great many, who
were

were curious and inquisitive to know the Truth, and afraid of being deceived. And it is as plain that they were all very honest Men, who, as they were afraid of being deceived themselves, so had no Intention to deceive the World; the Religion they taught obliged them to speak the Truth; for it threatened eternal Punishments against all Lyars and deceitful Persons; and it is incredible that such Men should promote their Religion by Frauds and Impostures. Indeed, if we consider their Breeding and Education, they were by no Means qualified to carry on such a Design; they had no Learning, no Interest or Authority; they were poor Fishermen and Publicans, and had little reason to hope that they should impose upon the World by a false, especially such an improbable Story as the Resurrection of a dead Man to Life again. And yet this they constantly affirmed, and preached to the People even at *Jerusalem*, where the Thing was said to be done, in the hearing of those Men who caused him to be crucified, and were nearly concerned to detect the Falshood, if it had been false, who were wise and learned Men, the Scribes and Pharisees, Men of Reputation and Interest; and this they did, tho' they knew they should be hated and persecuted for it, tho' they were threatned, and whipped, and put to Death; yet all the Scorn and Reproach, the fiercest and most bloody Persecutions, could not terrify

rify them from *preaching in the name of Christ, and testifying those things which they had both seen and heard.* And yet these Men were not mad, but appeared very wise and prudent in all other Matters; they were very devout Worshipers of God and a crucified Jesus, Men of exemplary Holiness, severe Preachers, who had no other visible Design in preaching the Resurrection of Christ, but to reform the Manners of Men, and to purge the World of Superstition and Idolatry, and the external Shews of Religion in antiquated and useles Ceremonies.

And it is worth observing, how these Men came by all this Courage and Resolution; for they were at first as fearful and timorous as other Men. When the *Jews* came to seize on Christ in the Garden, they all fled from him; and *Peter*, who pretended to more Courage than the rest, and had promised rather to die with Christ than to deny him, yet, when it came to the Tryal, did not dare to own him, but denied him three Times. When Christ was dead, they despaired of ever seeing him again. And yet all on a sudden these fearful Men became bold as a Lion, that Bonds and Imprisonments, and Death itself, could not fright them; but they rejoiced in being accounted worthy to suffer Bonds and Imprisonments, and the Loss of all Things for Christ's Sake. What should make such a sudden and wonderful Change
in

in these Men, but only this, that now they had seen their crucified Lord risen from the Dead, and were so assured of it, that they were ready to suffer the worst Things that could befall them, to bear Testimony to it?

But besides this, God himself bore Testimony to the Apostles, by enduing them with miraculous Gifts and Powers, that these unlearned Men were inspired with the Gift of Tongues, and enabled to work Miracles; which puts the Matter out of doubt, that their Testimony was true, since *God bore them witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,* Heb. ii. 3, 4.

This is as great Evidence as those could desire, who lived in the Apostles Time, and heard them give Testimony to the Resurrection of Christ, and saw the Miracles they wrought in Confirmation of it. And we, who did neither, have a faithful History of these Things carefully transmitted down to us in all Ages, which serves us instead of Eyes and Ears. We see what a Change this Faith hath wrought in the World; how a plain Story of the Death and Resurrection of Christ has confounded all the Wisdom of the Wise, has prevailed against the most powerful Oppositions, has converted great Part of the World, and made the greatest Monarchs submit their Sceptres to a crucified Jesus. This is a lasting and visible Demon-

Demonstration of the Power and Prevalency of this Faith, which has been attested by the Blood of so many Martyrs in all Ages, and has increased and propagated itself under the sharpest Persecutions; the most learned and inquisitive Men have believed it; fearful Women have sacrificed their Lives for it, and wearied their Tormentors with an obstinate Patience and Resolution, which neither Fear nor Flattery could conquer. This Faith hath been propagated to us by the Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, which have been dispersed into so many Hands, translated into so many Languages, preserved with such a solicitous Care, had in such Reverence and Esteem, that it is impossible they should have been corrupted in any material Part, but the Cheat must presently have been discovered.

This is the Evidence we have for the Resurrection of Christ without seeing, and what is there wanting in it to be the Foundation of a reasonable Faith? Do not all Men believe other Matters upon the tenth Part of this Evidence? Those who will not believe that Christ is risen, upon this Evidence, without seeing him, would not have believed in Christ, would not have owned him for the Messiah, tho' they had seen him rise from the Dead: For they will not believe upon reasonable Evidence, and that is the Spirit and Temper of Infidelity. The Difference between

tween those who saw Christ rise from the Dead, and us, who did not see him, but receive it upon credible Testimony, is only this, That our Faith begins a little sooner than theirs: The Matter of Fact, or the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead, whereon our Faith in Christ is founded, was the Object of Sense to them, but is the Object of Faith to us; they saw it, and we believe it upon credible Testimony; but those who are so averse to the Faith of Christ, that they will not believe his Resurrection upon reasonable Evidence, would not have believed the reasonable Evidence of his Resurrection to prove him to be the Messias; for all Faith, as I have shewn, is resolved into reasonable Evidence, and those who will not always believe upon reasonable Evidence, will never believe any Thing but what they please. No possible Evidence can make such Men Believers, who have an an infidel Temper. But let us thank God for that abundant Assurance he has given us of the Resurrection of Christ, and upon the Evidence of his Resurrection let us believe him to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; and then, as our Lord promises, we shall be blessed; then our Faith shall shortly be turned into Sight, our Hope into Enjoyment; we shall see him, in whom we now believe, and where he is, we shall be also.



SERMON XVII.

The Constraining Love of Christ.

2 COR. V. 14, 15.

For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

THES E Words contain the Reason of that extraordinary Zeal and Courage, wherewith the Apostles discharged their Ministry, and shew us, what Obligations lie upon all Christians to a most exemplary Holiness of Life. The Love of Christ constraineth us, *συνέχει*, lays hold of us, and captivates us to his Obedience. This Love of Christ was expressed in his dying for us, to deliver us from Death; because we thus judge,
that

352 *The Evidence of Faith*

that if one died for all, then were all dead; and the Reason of his dying for us, shews us our Obligation to all holy Obedience; for he died for all, that those who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him, who died and rose again for them, (for so the Words ought to be rendered) τῷ ὡς αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντι καὶ ἐγερθέντι.

In speaking to these Words I shall,

First, Consider the great Love of Christ in dying for us.

Secondly, What Obligations this lays on us to live to him, who died for us. And,

Thirdly, What a powerful Principle this Love is of all holy Obedience.

As for the first, the Apostle takes Notice of two Things, which greatly recommend the Love of Christ to us.

I. The miserable State Mankind was in, that we were all dead, under the Sentence and Condemnation of Death; which he proves, because Christ died for all, *If one died for all, then were all dead.* Christ died to redeem us from Death, to redeem us from the Curse of the Law, which is Death, by being made a Curse, by suffering an accursed Death for us. This is the greatest Thing he could

The Constraining Love of Christ. 353

could possibly have done for us, to deliver us from Death and Hell, and to bestow a new, a more glorious Immortality upon us. If it be better not to be than to be eternally miserable, to deliver us from eternal Misery is a greater Expression of Love and Goodness, than to give us a Being, to restore a lost and forfeited Life, than to give Life at first. That if it be lawful to make such a Comparison, the Love of God in giving his Son, and the Love of Christ in giving himself for us, had something more ravishing and transporting in it, than the mere Love of a Creator. To make a miserable Creature happy, is a more sensible Goodness, than to give Being to that which is not. So that if we consider what eternal Death signifies, as great a Sense as we have of the eternal Miseries of the Damned, which must have been the Portion of us all, such a Sense we shall have of the great Love of our Redeemer. A Love wholly owing to his own infinite and incomprehensible Goodness: For if we were all dead, we had nothing but Sin and Misery to make us the Objects of his Compassion and Love; which make us the proper Objects of a just Vengeance, but not of Love. And the less Reason there is in ourselves for Christ's Love, the more is it to be admired and adored.

354 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

2. The Manner of his redeeming us from Death, is as great and surprizing as the thing itself: That he should deliver us from Death by dying for us: That he who knew no Sin should be made Sin for us, should die a Sacrifice for our Sins, that we might be made the Righteousness of God through him. He who carefully studies the History of our Saviour's Sufferings, which were not only extremely painful, but aggravated with all the provoking Circumstances of Infamy and Contempt, must acknowledge that nothing less than an infinite Love could have submitted to, much less chose, such an infamous Death, for the Redemption of Sinners, who were Enemies to him through wicked Works. Our Saviour tells us, greater Love than this hath no Man, than to lay down his Life for his Friend: But his own Love was greater, who died for his Enemies to make them Friends. Herein *God commendeth his Love to us, that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. Especially if we consider how great a Person this was, who suffered such a painful, infamous, and accursed Death, to redeem us from Death. For he who was no less than the eternal Son of God incarnate, who took Human Nature upon him, and came into the World for this very End, that by Death he might destroy him who had the Power of Death; that by dying and rising again from the Dead, he might

The Constraining Love of Christ. 355

might abolish Death, and give Mankind a new Right and Title to immortal Life. Tho' he was *in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God: Yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross,* Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8. I have formerly shewn you, that the Death of a mere Man, how perfect and excellent soever he had been, could not have made a sufficient Atonement for the Redemption of all Mankind from Death. And it is as evident, that had Christ been a mere Man, there had been no great Mystery of Love in his dying upon the Cross, in obedience to the Will of God. And whatever Blessings God might have intended us by his Death, he had been only a Creature-Minister of them, who had neither been concerned in laying this gracious Design, nor so much as in giving an antecedent Consent to it; but must have come into the World without knowing any more of the Matter than other Men do, when they are born. The Scripture magnifies the Love of God in giving his own Son to be our Saviour; but there had been no such great Mystery in this, had this Person, whom he calls his Son, been a mere Creature. It is certain there had been no great reason so much to ad-

356 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

admire the Love of a Creature-Saviour, which is an Office above the Ambition of the most glorious Angels; which exalts a Creature to the Right-hand of God, seats him in his Throne, and makes him the Lord and Judge of the World, and makes him the Object of divine Worship and Adoration. Which is such a Glory, as no Creature is capable of receiving, and which a jealous God, who will admit of no Rival, can never communicate to a mere Creature.

But if Christ be the eternal Son of God, who became Man, and died upon the Cross, to deliver us from Death, this is a Mystery too big for some Men's Faith; and those who do believe it, must admire and adore, but can never comprehend it. This leaves no other Reason for all that he did and suffered, but only Love; and that makes his Love as infinite and incomprehensible as his Person is. But the more incomprehensible his Love is, the more it exceeds all the scanty Creature-Measures of Love and Goodness, the more constraining Force and Power it has.

Thus had Christ appeared in the World only as a great Prophet, to make the last and most perfect Revelation of God's Will concerning the Salvation of Mankind, and had died and risen again from the Dead only in confirmation of that Gospel which he preached, we must have owned him the greatest Prophet that ever God sent into the World; but could
have

The Constraining Love of Christ. 357

have seen no more of his Love in all this, than in other Prophets; who tho' they were not so fully instructed in the Will of God, as Christ was, yet discharged their Trust faithfully, declared all that God had declared to them, and many of them also sealed their Testimony with their own Blood. But when we consider, that Christ so died for us, as to bear the Punishment of our Sins, to die in our stead, to be made Sin, and to be made a Curse for us, by Death to conquer Death, and to redeem us from the Power and Dominion of it, this we must acknowledge to be all Love, a great, surprizing, and constraining Love; which exacts from us all the Returns of Duty and Obedience.

Secondly, What Obligations this lays on us to live to him, who died for us. And that he died for us, that we, who live, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him, who died for us, and rose again.

To live to ourselves, when it is opposed to living to Christ, signifies to follow our own Wills, and Lusts, and Passions; to consult our own Ease, and Pleasure, and Profit, and Honour, in opposition to the Will and Laws of Christ. And to live to Christ, signifies, to make his Laws the Rules of our Actions, and to be very zealous and industrious in advancing his Service, and Glory, and Kingdom in the World. This made St. Paul and

358 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

the other Apostles with such unwearied Labours and Difficulties, and with the Expence of their own Blood, travel Sea and Land, to publish the Gospel throughout the World. And this makes all good Men so careful in the discharge of their several Duties, to reform their own Lives, and to be great Examples of all Christian Graces and Virtues, and to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and to do all the good they can both to the Souls and to the Bodies of Men. This is to live to Christ, and our Obligation to it is, that for this End Christ died for us, that those, who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again; that is, he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works: That he loved his Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of Water by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it might be holy and without Blemish. So that this does not signify the mere Obligations of Thankfulness and Gratitude to live to him, who died for us, but is a necessary Disposition, Preparation, nay, of the Nature and Essence of our Redemption from Death. This is the true Gospel Notion of saving Sinners, to save them from the Power and Dominion, as well as from

The Constraining Love of Christ. 359

from the Punishment of their Sins; for one cannot be done without the other; and when Christ dies for us, to redeem us from Death, this Redemption must begin in giving a new spiritual Life to the Soul. For a Soul, which continues in the State of Death, can never rise into immortal Life. Now Sin is the Death of the Soul, and wicked Men are said to be dead in Trespases and Sins; and therefore they must first die to Sin, to live to God, or live to Christ who died for them, before they are capable of a glorious Resurrection into immortal Life. And for this reason Christ died for us, that we might live to him, to renew and sanctify our Natures, to bestow a new Principle of spiritual Life on us, and to enable us by his Grace and holy Spirit to conquer all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and to triumph over all our spiritual Enemies. And is not this a necessary Reason to live to him, who died for us? It certainly is so, if we would be redeemed by him from Death: For here our Redemption from Death begins, in quickning a dead Soul, in raising it from the Death of Sin into a Life of Righteousness. And this is a mighty Encouragement to us to live to him, who died for us, that by his Death he has purchased supernatural Assistances to enable us to live to him, that the Law of the Spirit of Life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes us free from the Law of Sin and Death,

360 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

and that Sin shall not have Dominion over us; for we are not under the Law, but under Grace. We cannot complain for want of Power, or make this an Excuse for not living to Christ, if we wisely improve that Grace, which is afforded us, and readily comply with all the Motions of the Holy Spirit. And now this brings us under all the Obligations of Gratitude and Thankfulness, to live to him, who died for us, and hath redeemed us with his own Blood.

Which was the third Thing proposed, to consider this constraining Power of Christ's Love. When the Love of Christ kindles a divine Passion in our Souls for our dying Lord, it is a most powerful Principle of Action, beyond all that mere natural Reason or Philosophy could ever do. In this degenerate State of human Nature, Passion is too powerful for our Reason; and the best Way to conquer Passion, is by Passion; to conquer Love by Love, and Hope by Hope, and Fear by Fear; which is the Gospel-way of reforming the World, by threatening such terrible Punishments against Sinners, and by promising such great Rewards to good Men, as are too powerful for all the Hopes and Fears of this Life, and, which is the Thing I am at present to consider, such a constraining Love as will conquer all earthly Passions. The Love of God in giving his Son, and the
Love

The Constraining Love of Christ. 361

Love of Christ in giving himself for us, is beyond all expression great; and whoever lives under a powerful Sense of this Love, will obtain an easy Victory over the World and the Flesh, and make great Attainments in Piety and Virtue.

For let us consider, how we behave ourselves towards those Men, whose Kindness and Friendship we have experienced in our dearest Concernments. Their Love to us gives them such an Authority, that their Word is a Law, the least Intimation of their Will is chearfully obeyed, and we are glad of an Opportunity of doing them any acceptable Service, how difficult or uneasy soever it proves: We submit our Humours to theirs, deny ourselves in many Instances to please them, and are never better pleased ourselves then when we please them. We never think we can do too much to repay their Kindness, and if it were possible, to out do it. What admirable Christians should we be, had we such a constant Sense of our Saviour's Love? As to shew the Advantages of this constraining Love in some particular Instances.

First, Most of our Saviour's Laws are so manifestly good and just, that all Men must see and confess the Reasonableness of them. But then the Love of our Lord adds the Force of a divine Passion to Reason, and strengthens natural Conscience with a Sense of Love and Gratitude.

362 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

Gratitude. And when our Lord makes that a Return of Love and Thankfulness to him, which Nature and Reason itself had made our Duty, what could he require less of us, or what could we do less in return of his Love, than to live as reasonable Creatures ought to live, whether he had commanded it or not.

Secondly, But yet many of these Laws, tho' they are manifestly just and reasonable, are so contrary to the corrupt Inclinations of Nature, that the Observance of them is very difficult. We must pluck out Right Eyes, and cut off Right Hands, and crucify the old Man, with its Affections and Lusts; and how reasonable soever this may be, mere Reason cannot conquer the Difficulties of it, nor support Men under the perpetual Uneasiness of such Conflicts. But the Love of our dying Lord is a new Principle of Action, which glories in difficult Tryals, and bears down all contrary Inclinations. This is the natural Power of Love, as St *John* tells us, *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous*: Whatever they are to a corrupt Nature, this divine Love makes them easy; especially when we remember, what our Lord hath done and suffered for us, when we remember his Agony and bloody Sweat, his Scourgings, and Buffetings, and Crown of Thorns, when we see him nailed in an infamous Manner to the Cross,

The Constraining Love of Christ. 363

Cross, is thy Heart's Blood too much for him, who shed his Blood for thee? Wilt thou not sacrifice a Right Eye and a Right Hand, and crucify the old Man, and nail thy most beloved Lusts to his Cross, who bore thy Sins in his own Body upon the Tree?

Thirdly, There are some of our Saviour's Laws which natural Reason may boggle at, the Reason of which may not at first sight be evident to mere natural Men, especially as to the Measures and Degrees of Duty. And such Men are apt to excuse themselves from these Laws, or to expound them away, to bring them down to the Level of human Reason and natural Measures; such as the Contempt of this World, Heavenly-mindedness, the Love of Enemies, forgiving Injuries, not avenging ourselves, and the Profuseness and Prodigality of Charity, and indeed most of the peculiar Graces of the Christian Life, which either as to the Nature, Degrees, or peculiar Instances of them, exceed the Measures of mere Nature. Now whatever Accounts may be given of such Laws (as very wise Accounts may be given of them, if not from mere natural Reason, yet from the Nature, and End, and peculiar Reasons of the Gospel Dispensation) yet the Love of our dying Lord, who has given us these Laws, is itself a Reason, and there needs no other. This he would have us do, this is an acceptable Service

364 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

vice to him, this is the Return he expects from us for his dying Love, and all the bitter Agonies of his Passion. And can any Christian, who feels the Love of Christ, desire any other, or any better Reason than this? And it is of mighty use in Religion to silence all Disputes about our Duty, to have one governing Reason, which may supply the place of all other Arguments, and answer all Objections, and is not only a Reason, but a most powerful Principle of Obedience; and that is, the constraining Love of Christ, which gives Authority to all his Laws, tho' we knew no other Reason for them.

Fourthly, I observe farther, that a due Sense of the Love of our dying Lord, will admit of no Bounds or Measures to our Obedience. Most Men are willing to excuse themselves, and to do as little good as they can, to satisfy natural Conscience: But a Sense of Love and Gratitude gives us another and a better Spirit: When we do all we can, and yet certainly know we can never answer our Obligations, and then we shall never think we can do enough, much less that we can ever do too much. This will make us steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord. For when the Love and Obligation is too great ever to be fully answered, we shall not easily satisfy ourselves with some low Attainments, but shall be pressing

The Constraining Love of Christ. 365

pressing forward, and endeavouring still to do more and better for the Service of our Lord.

Fifthly, I shall add but one Thing more, that a just Sense of the Love of our dying Lord will admit of no Delay in the Returns of Duty and Obedience. When Men are under strong Convictions of their Duty, and the necessity of Repentance and Reformation, the usual Cheat they put upon themselves, is, to defer as long as they can; and they commonly defer all their Lives, and then repent of their Delay, when they come to die; when Repentance, I fear, generally comes too late: When all that Men design by their Repentance is to escape Hell, they may flatter themselves, that any Time before they die is Time enough to repent. But when the Love of our Lord is the Reason and Principle of our Obedience, such Returns are due, and will take place, as soon as we have any Sense of this Love. There is no Time set for the Returns of Gratitude; he that offends and disoblige a Friend To-day, may do so for ever. The first Sense of our Obligations is commonly the strongest; and when Men have conquered that, they have lost it for ever.

Thus I have shewn you how powerful a Principle the Love of Christ is of all holy Obedience. That if we would conquer all the flattering Temptations of this World, we must affect our Souls with a warm and constant

366 *The Constraining Love of Christ.*

stant Sense of the Love of our Lord, we must frequently meditate on his Cross and Passion, which he himself has instituted a perpetual Memorial of in his last Supper. This is the proper Exercise of Devotion in the approaching Solemnity of his Passion, not to weep and mourn over a crucified Jesus; for he is advanced from the Cross to the Throne; but to meditate on his dying Love, to mortify all our earthly Affections, that the World may be crucified unto us, and we unto the World.

SER-



SERMON XVIII.

The Evidence of Prophecy that Jesus is the Messias.

LUKE XXIV. 25, 26, 27.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken? Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.

THE Crucifixion of Christ was a very great Scandal to the Jews, who expected a temporal Prince and Saviour; and the Disciples of Christ themselves laboured under this Prejudice: And therefore when he told them very plainly of his dying and rising again from the Dead, they did not understand

368 *The Evidence of Prophecy,*

stand what he meant: And when they actually saw him Crucified, Dead, and Buried, they began to suspect that they were mistaken in him; and that notwithstanding all the mighty Works he did, he was not that Messiah whom God had promised to send into the World: As is evident from these two Disciples that were going to *Emmaus*, to whom Christ appeared and communed with them by the Way; they tell him the sad Story of the Death of Jesus, how great a Prophet he was, and what Opinion they had of his being the Messiah; and how his Crucifixion had dashed all these Hopes; *but we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel*, that is, the promised Messiah; which intimates, that now at least they very much suspected that he was not. Nay, when the same Evening Christ himself appeared to his Disciples, they could not believe their own Eyes; but thought it had been a Spirit, till Christ in Compassion to their Weakness gave them convincing Proofs that it was he himself; and yet he did not think this sufficient to appear to them after his Resurrection, without expounding to them the ancient Prophecies which foretold that the Messiah should die and rise again from the Dead; for if the Messiah was not to die, his rising again from the Dead could not have proved him to have been the Messiah; and therefore he told the Disciples going to *Emmaus*, *Ought not*

not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. And when he appeared unto the Eleven, he said unto them, These are the words which I said unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day. I do not intend to explain unto you the ancient Types and Prophecies of the Death and Sufferings of the Messias, which all Orthodox Christians do competently understand, and are well satisfied about: But my Design at present is, to shew you what a mighty Confirmation this gives to the Person and Gospel of our Saviour, that it was all punctually foretold by the ancient Prophets, in their several Generations, from the Beginning of the World: Which is the highest Evidence we can possibly have for any Thing, which is not evident to Sense, or demonstrable by the Light of Nature; and creates in all considering Men as firm an Assent, as either Sense or Demonstration can do; for it is no more possible to doubt of the one, than of the other.

370 *The Evidence of Prophecy*

To state this Matter as plainly as I can, I shall, *First*, consider the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets as divinely inspired.

And, *Secondly*, For the better Conviction of those who reject all Inspiration, I shall consider them as very ancient Writings, all of which were known and received by the *Jews*, long before the Time of our Saviour; most of them many Ages before.

First, To consider the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets as divinely inspired, and containing true Prophecies of what was to be in After-ages. This all sincere Christians believe, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are inspired Books, and both our Saviour and his Apostles lay great Weight upon the Testimony of the Scripture; and in all their Disputes with the *Jews*, make their Appeal to *Moses* and the Prophets, and desire to be believed no farther. *Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?* John v. 39. 46, 47. Thus St. Peter in his Sermon on the Day of Pentecost, proves the Resurrection of Christ, and explains the miraculous Effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, as the Accomplishment of ancient Prophecies. And St. Paul always reasons with the *Jews*
out

out of the Scripture : Thus he did at *Thessalonica*. He went into the synagogue of the Jews, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ, Acts xvii. 1, 2, 3. For this Reason the Bereans are highly commended, as more noble than those of *Thessalonica*, In that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so : and therefore many of them believed, ver. 11, 12. For if God had promised to send the Messias into the World, and given the most particular Marks and Characters whereby he should be known when he did appear; that Person who answers these Characters, must be that Messias whom God promised to send; for otherwise all these Prophecies are to no Purpose, if all the Marks and Characters of the Messias may meet in any one Person who is not that Messias. Were all these Marks and Characters capable of being counterfeited, yet the Divine Providence is concerned to take Care that they shall never all meet in any other Person; which would destroy the Truth or Certainty of Prophecy. Thus much must be granted, that if according to the ancient Prophecies the Messias was to be put to death, and to rise again the third Day; then the Death of

372 *The Evidence of Prophecy*

Christ, tho' very infamous, was no Objection against his being the Messias; but, on the contrary, the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead, being so peculiar to himself, that no other Man since the Beginning of the World, did thus die, and rise again from the Dead; which is above the Power of Men and Devils to counterfeit; it must infallibly prove him to be the promised Messias.

But I must consider this Matter more particularly. There being some among us who will not allow the ancient Types and Prophecies to be a direct Proof of Christianity; which I take to be the strongest Proof of all; such a Proof, as without which, all other Proofs would want much of their Strength and Clearness. I am sure it is the chief, and upon some Accounts I may say the only Proof, which both Christ and his Apostles made use of in their Disputes with the *Jews*. And if this be not a good Proof, Christ and his Apostles never sufficiently proved against the *Jews*, that he was that Messias which was to come into the World; which all good Christians should abhor the Thoughts of.

These Men grant, that when we are convinced of the Truth of Christianity by other Arguments, these ancient Types and Prophecies may give some additional Confirmation to our Faith, but that they are no direct and immediate Proof of themselves; and yet Christ and his Apostles appeal to the Law
and

and the Prophets, to convince the *Jews* who did not believe; and therefore certainly they thought them a very direct Proof, and a sufficient Reason and Foundation for Faith.

But to reason the Case a little with these Men, I would ask them, Whether they believe, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament do contain the Types and Prophecies of the Messias? To deny this, is to contradict the Faith both of *Jews* and Christians, who universally own that the Promises of the Messias, and Predictions concerning him, are the principal Subject both of the Law and the Prophets; and if there be such Prophecies concerning the Messias, I desire to know whether they must not all be accomplished in him when he appears? Whether the Accomplishment of them be not the Marks and Characters whereby he must be known when he does appear? And, Whether there can be any other sufficient Reason to own any Person for the Messias, in whom all the Prophecies concerning the Messias are not accomplished? Without allowing all this, no Man can tell what Prophecies are good for, or what End they serve, why the coming of the Messias should be foretold with so many particular Circumstances, relating to his Person and Offices, to his Doctrine and Miracles, to his Life, and Death, and Resurrection. And if they were intended for such Characters, whereby he should be known when he did appear, I take it to be a necessary Proof,

that that Person is the Messiah in whom all these Characters meet; and that there can be no Proof of any Person's being the Messiah without them; it is certain the *Jews* in our Saviour's Days thought so; they had entertained a wrong Notion of their Messiah, that he should be a temporal Prince, who should restore a temporal Kingdom to *Israel*, break the *Roman* Yoke under which they groaned, and subdue all Nations to them. For thus they expounded what the Prophets had foretold concerning the Kingdom of the Messiah, its Extent and Glory; but they saw that Jesus was not such a Prince as this, nor made any Pretence to such a Kingdom; from whence they concluded, that he was not that Messiah whom God had promised to send, and whom the ancient Prophets had described; and therefore tho' he declared himself to be the Messiah, and wrought so many and so great Miracles, as never any Man wrought before, as great an Opinion as they had of Miracles, they would not be convinced by them that he was the Messiah, who as they thought did not answer that Character the Prophets had given of the Messiah; and had their Premises been right, their Conclusion had been infallible.

I readily grant, that those great and mighty Works which our Saviour wrought, were a sufficient Reason for the *Jews* to believe on him, as our Saviour tells them, *Had I not done such works among you as never man did, you had not had sin; but now have you both seen*

seen and hated both me and my Father. For these Miracles was one of the Marks which the ancient Prophets had given of the Messias, and the first and most sensible Proof of his divine Mission; as the *Jews* themselves own, in that Saying, *When Christ comes, will he do greater works than this man doth?* But then our Saviour himself appeals to his Works, not merely as they were great and wonderful, and such as never any Man did before, but as they were the Works which his Father had given him to do. *John v. 36. The works which my Father hath given me to do, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.* And therefore he always calls them *his Father's works*, and the works which he did in *his Father's name*, *John x. 25.* Now what is the Meaning of this? How should the Jews know what Works the Father had given him to do? And if they could not know this, How could it be any Proof to them that the Father had sent him? Yes, they knew this by the ancient Prophecies, which foretold what great Works he should do; and these are the Works which his Father had given him to do. And therefore when *John* the Baptist had sent his Disciples to Jesus, saying, *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* he does not only appeal to the Testimony of Miracles tho' never so great and certain, (for Miracles, as Miracles, could only prove him to be a true Prophet, but not the

376 *The Evidence of Prophecy*

Messias) but he appeals to such Miracles as the ancient Prophets had foretold the Messias should do when he came. *Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised; and to the poor the Gospel is preached,* Luke vii. 27. Which are the very Miracles the Messias was to do when he came. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing,* Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6. Which are such a sort of Miracles as were peculiar to the Messias; and shewed his great Compassion to Mankind, which began with bodily Cures, and extended to all the Maladies of their Souls. And therefore St. *Matthew* tells us, that his healing the Sicknesses and Infirmities of Men, was in part an Accomplishment of that Prophecy, *He took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,* Matth. viii. 17. Now it being so plainly foretold, not only that the Messias should work many Miracles, but what kind of Miracles he should work; when they saw Jesus do those very Works which the Messias was to do, it was a just Reason to believe in him, tho' they did not yet see all the other Prophecies relating to the Messias, actually accomplished; which were not all to be done at once, but in their proper Order and Season. And therefore the

the Demonstration of his being the Messias could not be compleat and perfect till all was accomplished, which was finished in his Death, in his Resurrection, and in his Ascension into Heaven, and sending his Holy Spirit upon his Apostles and Disciples; and had it been possible after he had done those mighty Works which the Messias was to do, that all the other Prophecies relating to the Messias should never have been accomplished in him, it would have justified the Infidelity of the *Jews*.

For we must observe a vast Difference between a first and a second Revelation. When God first reveals himself and his Will to the World, the only Confirmation that can be given to it, is by great and unquestionable Miracles, which give a Divine Testimony to the Prophet. Thus God confirmed the Authority of *Moses*, by all the Signs and Wonders which he did in *Egypt*, and in the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness: But when any Religion is once established and confirmed by Miracles, tho' another Prophet should arise which should work as great and as many Miracles as the first; this would be no just Reason to make any Change in a Religion which was already confirmed by Miracles; for this would oppose Miracles to Miracles, which would confound Mankind, and tempt them to believe neither; and therefore there can be no essential Change made in a Religion

378 *The Evidence of Prophecy*

once throughly established, without publick Notice given of such a Change to be made, and of what Nature this Change shall be, when it shall be made, by whom, and what are the Marks and Characters of that Prophet who shall thus reform Religion. And here Miracles must come in, as being the most divine and infallible Authority. But then these Miracles give Testimony to such a Prophet, not merely considered as great and wonderful Works; but as they are such Works as the ancient Prophets foretold the Messias should do; which directs us to seek for the Accomplishment of all other Prophecies which relate to the Messias, in that Person who is endowed with these miraculous Powers, which is a plain Proof that the Belief of the Messias, and the Proof of Christianity, must be resolved into the Accomplishment of ancient Prophecies. And this is the Foundation of our Faith in Jesus, that he is the Christ.

Let us then now consider what an irresistible Authority this gives to the Faith of Christ, beyond what any one single Evidence could do, tho' it were Miracles themselves; for here is no Possibility of any Cheat or Imposture; these Prophecies concerning the Messias were delivered in several Ages, very remote from each other, with different Clearness, and by Parts; one Prophet gives a Description of his Person or Office, some represent him as a Prophet, others as a King, other

others as a Priest and Sacrifice ; some describe the sorrowful Circumstances of his Death, others the Glory of his Kingdom, others his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven ; and as the Time of his Appearance drew near, their Characters of him were more clear and particular, that there can be no Suspicion of any Compact or Agreement amongst these Prophets, to impose upon the World ; and it was equally impossible, that there should be any Cheat or Imposture in the Accomplishment of these Prophecies, which were all scattered through the whole Body of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, and were never represented in one View till they were all fulfilled in Christ. Nay, many of them were grossly mistaken, till Christ and his Apostles, and the Event itself expounded them, that if any Man had had a mind to play the Impostor, and to counterfeit the fulfilling of Prophecies, he knew not what Part to act ; and many of these Prophecies were such, as it was impossible to counterfeit them ; as his miraculous Birth of a pure Virgin, the Miracles he wrought while he lived, and his Resurrection from the Dead ; others were accomplished without any human Design of fulfilling Prophecies, as his being born at *Bethlehem*, where *Joseph* and *Mary* went up to be taxed ; and all the Circumstances of his Arraignment, before the High-Priest and *Pontius Pilate* ; his being nailed
to

the Cross, which pierced his Hands and his Feet, his being hung between two Thieves, and being numbered amongst the Transgressors, the Soldiers piercing his Side with a Spear, and not breaking his Bones, as they did the Bones of the two Thieves that were crucified with him; their parting his Raiment among them, and casting Lots upon his Vesture; their crucifying him at the Time of the Passover, which fulfilled that Type, he being the true Paschal Lamb, *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*: Those who did these Things little thought of fulfilling Types and Prophecies; that it is certain that there was no Cheat or Collusion in this Matter, and yet all this was foretold of the Messiah, and literally fulfilled in Jesus. In a word, That the Miracles, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, were the Accomplishment of ancient Prophecies concerning the Messiah, answers all the Objections that are or can be made against it.

Many Men are very suspicious of Miracles, some think them all Cheats and Tricks of Leger-de-main, others with the Pharisees attribute them to the Power of Evil Spirits, *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils*. Now tho' the Miracles of our Saviour were such, as had lasting and sensible Effects, and therefore could not be counterfeit; and nothing could be more unreasonable or absurd, than to charge him with a Confederacy

deracy with wicked Spirits ; yet it sufficiently confutes all these Pretences, that the Prophets so many Ages before, foretold that the Messias should work these Miracles ; and therefore we cannot doubt but that they were real Miracles, and wrought by a divine Power, since he who wrought these Miracles answers all the other Characters which the Prophets had given of the Messias. Thus both *Jews* and *Gentiles* took offence at the Cross of Christ, *which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness* ; but if it was foretold that the Messias must die just after such a manner as Jesus did, whatever Offence is taken at the Cross, this proves him to be the Messias ; and we must not have owned him for the Messias, had he not thus died.

When Christ was risen from the Dead, the *Jews* invented an improbable and ridiculous Story, that his Disciples came by Night and stole him away ; now tho' the Testimony of the Apostles and Disciples who saw him, handled him, eat and drank with him after he was risen from the Dead, be without all Exception ; yet the ancient Prophecies that the Messias should die and rise again the third Day, *Thou wilt not leave his soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption*, gives an undeniable Authority to the Testimony of the Apostles ; for they testify no other than what the Law and the Prophets had

382 *The Evidence of Prophecy*

had foretold; and which they themselves had seen the Accomplishment of.

To conclude this Argument: The ancient Prophets had foretold that the Messias should come into the World; and therefore such a Person as they describe, is, or must come into the World. All the Times prefixed by the Prophets for his coming are long since past; and no such Person has appeared, but only our Jesus; and in him all the Types and Prophecies of the Law are punctually fulfilled; and this is the last Resolution of our Faith, that this is he of whom *Moses* in the Law, and the Prophets did write. I know not what is wanting in this Evidence, nor what can be added to it, if we allow *Moses* and the Prophets to be divinely inspired; this those Men seem aware of, who endeavour so industriously to lessen their Authority. And therefore,

Secondly, I shall say but a very few Words to those who will not allow the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be divinely inspired; for whether they will or no, they must, 1. Allow them to be very ancient Writings, which were published long before the Time of Christ's appearing in the World. 2. They must allow that they contain these Prophecies and Predictions concerning the Messias, and the particular Characters of his Person, and Birth, and Life, and Doctrine, and Miracles, and Death,

Death, and Resurrection; for we read all this in these Books still, which were always preserved in the Hands of the *Jews*, who are bitter Enemies to Christ and his Religion, and therefore could not be falsified by Christians in favour of their Master. And, 3. They must allow, whether the Gospels be inspired Writings or not, if they contain a true History of Christ, then all that *Moses* and the Prophets have said concerning their Messias was fully accomplished in him, and that such a Person as they had described, did appear in the World, at the Time which they had allotted for his coming; and the Accomplishment of any Prediction, proves it to be a true Prophecy, and that, I suppose, proves that the Writers of it were divinely inspired; and thus we are come back to Inspiration again, unless they can tell us, how any Man can foretel things to come for so many Ages before, without being divinely inspired.

The proper Use of this is, in such an Age of Infidelity, to confirm our Faith in Christ, in whom all the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled, *That we may confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead, that we may be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*



